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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the vulnerability of working children to possible exploitation and abuse, this report examines remunerated and unremunerated work performed by children worldwide, ranging from child labor in factories and agriculture to work conducted within the family household. Section 1 of the report describes the scale and importance of children's work, considers children's work within the context of childhood, and focuses on the ethical debate regarding children's work. Section 2 discusses the causes of children working, including macro-level poverty and inequality, household poverty, social attitudes, and biases against girls' education. Section 3 assesses the costs and benefits of child work. Section 4 describes interventions to address poverty, improve children's working conditions, regulate or eliminate child work, and increase working children's participation in education. Section 5 details 10 recommendations for improving the lives of working children: (1) measuring impact of interventions; (2) obtaining working children's participation; (3) incorporating micro-macro linkages in programming; (4) combining intervention approaches; (5) developing more precise criteria to assess risks and hazards; (6) defining exploitation; (7) reviewing institutional issues to identify ways to improve coordination between different actors in relation to child work; (8) continuing social impact assessment; (9) awareness-raising; and (10) continuing research on child work. The appendices discuss a framework and criteria for assessing interventions, the nature of hazards and the forms of exploitation faced by working children, and international legislation relating to child labor. Contains 102 references. (Author/KB)

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# Small hands

## Children in the working world

*Rachel Marcus*

*Caroline Harper*

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working paper
number 16

# *Small hands*

## *Children in the working world*

*Rachel Marcus*

*Caroline Harper*

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Save the Children

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# Foreword

For several years SCF has systematically engaged with working children's issues in the form of project and advocacy work. However, the need for a clear statement of position which incorporated the complexity of the issue and linked project and advocacy work more effectively became increasingly urgent as actions such as import bans in South Asia had unforseen and detrimental effects on the lives of children. At the same time concern among importers of subcontracted goods made by children was on the rise and SCF was increasingly approached for advice on the issue. The need for a global position on children and work crystallised with the considerable attention to children and work issues at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 and leading up to the planned international conference on child work in Oslo in 1997.

SCF's position on children and work emanates from its mandate to work towards making a reality of children's rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly address the right to freedom from economic exploitation (Article 32), the right to education (Articles 28 and 29), the right of children to participate in decisions affecting them (Article 12) and the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27). SCF recognises that while the reasons why children work are complex, many children have limited options and work to ensure their own and family survival. In this context, improving the conditions under which children work is a priority. However, SCF is committed to the elimination of hazardous and exploitative forms of work - all those which endanger children's health and development.

This paper aims to illustrate the complexity of child work issues but is also designed to help develop strategies for action on child work by analysing a range of causes and the ingredients of successful and less successful interventions. It can thus be used both as a position paper and as a tool for central and field offices to enable action. The main focus is children and work in the South. However, recognising that children work globally, reference is also made to children's work in the North. SCF is, or has recently been, involved in projects, advocacy and research (directly or through partners) related to child work in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Haiti, Brazil, Peru, the Philippines, Lebanon, Northern Iraq and Northern Ireland. Given the strong relation between child work and issues of poverty, vulnerability, food security, health, education, water supply and children's rights, many of SCF's other programmes which do not explicitly address child work, in fact have a bearing on the issue.

It is intended that this paper will form part of SCF's global strategy on child work, and will also enable other international, governmental and non-governmental organisations to work together and more effectively on child work issues.

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# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| AAFLI | Asian-American Free Labour Institute |
| CBO | Community Based Organisation |
| DCI | Defence for Children International |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| ILO | International Labour Office |
| INSEC | Informal Sector Service Centre |
| MANTHOC | Movement of Working Children and Adolescents from Christian Working Class Families |
| NATRAS | Movement of Working Children and Adolescents of Nicaragua |
| NGO | Non-Govermental Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| SAP | Structual Adjustment Programme |
| SCF | Save the Children Fund (UK) |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

# Executive summary

It is indisputable that considerable numbers of poor children work. They work in the household, and in household production, such as on family farms or in family businesses; they work to earn money through wage or self-employment; and they work in order to enable others to work, for example by caring for siblings while parents work elsewhere. The conditions and nature of children's work vary widely from occupations where children are able to develop responsibility and skills, and combine work with schooling, to conditions of extreme hazard and exploitation. The extent to which work is harmful or beneficial to children depends on a number of factors, including: the type of work, the hours they work, their age, their access to education, whether or not they are separated from their families for long periods and the degree of exposure to specific hazards.

Working children are often more vulnerable than adults to exploitation and abuse and children of minority ethnic groups, lower castes, girls and younger children may be particularly so. Children's particular vulnerability derives from their relative powerlessness compared to adults and their specific physical, mental and emotional development needs. Specific measures are therefore often required to prevent the exploitation and abuse of working children. Working children's vulnerability is also exacerbated by the widespread failure of policy-makers, planners and activists to recognise working children's capacities, the tendency for policy on children to be made without their participation, and by the continued invisibility of much of children's work. Because it is not recognised as work, but seen as 'help' or as a natural activity of girlhood or boyhood, or because it takes place away from the public gaze in children's own or others' homes, or in fields distant from roads, the full extent of children's work is often not appreciated.

SCF's position on child work draws upon our experience of programming with working children, an analysis of the major constraints they face and advocacy with them and on their behalf. It also draws upon the principles of survival, non-discrimination, participation and action in children's best interests embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our analysis draws upon experience worldwide, particularly in the South. This paper strives to cover as wide a variety of forms of work and conditions as possible, whilst recognising that in some contexts, the relevance of different approaches will vary.

1. SCF recognises that many children have limited options and that they often need to work to ensure their own, and their families' survival. SCF deplores the conditions of poverty and inequality that give rise to this situation. These derive, in part, from structural inequalities between regions, countries and people, and in some cases have been exacerbated by macro-economic trends, including the unregulated rapid growth of market economies, and the pressures of adjustment and transition programmes. These have often served to increase the vulnerability of poor households, and to reduce the resources available for state educational and welfare provision. In such contexts, children's work can make a critical contribution to household income, and can constitute a more attractive option for children and parents than underfunded, low quality education. SCF believes that it is critical that the significance of this macro-level context as a cause of child work is not underestimated and that policies and interventions to address child work incorporate an analysis of the linkages between macro-economic trends and policies and the micro-level impact on children's lives.

2. In addition to poverty, other structural social inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, age, class and caste, influence which children work, the kinds of work they do, and their working conditions. Perceptions of what constitutes childhood vary widely between cultures and full-time work may be considered the most appropriate activity for a poor, low caste, or minority child. Likewise, girls may be expected to work while their brothers attend school. The inequalities in social

and educational service provision and in economic opportunities between rural and urban areas can create particular pressures: on rural children to work long hours and not to attend school, on urban children to take advantage of particular economic opportunities, and sometimes on rural children to migrate, voluntarily or forcibly to urban areas to take up these legal and illegal opportunities. Children living and working away from their families are often particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Addressing social inequalities of this kind requires action at governmental and sometimes inter-governmental level, as well as locally.

3. SCF recognises that much international debate and action on child work is implicitly based on a model of childhood as a protracted period without economic responsibilities, dedicated to learning and recreation. This bears little relation to the experiences of most of the world's children, in the South or North. In many contexts work is an important part of socialisation and may represent a rational response to the limited options children and their families face. Often a combination of factors push and pull children into work. In addition to the factors that promote the supply of children's labour, such as poverty, social inequality and different perceptions of childhood, in certain sectors there is a demand for children because they are cheaper, more docile, and, some argue, more nimble. Lack of access to quality education, or the existence of particular income-earning opportunities may pull children into work. Intervention strategies must be based on a thorough understanding of the complexity of the reasons children work in particular contexts. SCF believes, however, that a recognition of the variety of forms of childhood, or of the poverty in which the overwhelming majority of working children live should not be allowed to constitute a justification for failing to address hazardous and exploitative forms of child work.

4. SCF believes that working children know their own immediate situations best. Policy, planning and action on child work issues must involve the participation of working children and that of their families. This will help ensure that action is based on the reality of children's lives and enhance the likelihood of its success. It will also help reduce the possibility of interventions having unforeseen negative consequences. Promoting the participation of working children and their families in solving their own problems may involve, among other activities, supporting the development of working children's organisations. Genuine participation may require skilled facilitation and the use of innovative methodologies to include younger children, girls, lower castes, disadvantage ethnic groups and disabled children. SCF recognises that the complexity of child work issues means that understanding and taking account of the views of other stakeholders may be critical to effective programming.

5. SCF believes that children's work in hazardous, exploitative, socially damaging or educationally limiting occupations is unacceptable and should be eradicated. More precise measures are needed for assessing the acceptability of particular forms of work. Such measures should be developed in consultation with working children. There is, however, already sufficient evidence to define certain forms of work as unacceptable. These include commercial sex work, involvement in military operations, bonded labour, mining, and all industries and agriculture where children are exposed to toxic chemicals. In general, there is a need for organisations concerned with child work to specify more clearly what they consider unacceptable child work and therefore what their policies and programmes aim to achieve.

6. SCF also recognises that non-hazardous and non-exploitative forms of work can be beneficial to children educationally and socially, through enabling them to develop problem-solving skills and by helping them to develop self-confidence and respect in their families and communities. Such work may constitute part of children's participation in their own cultural and social development and

that of their communities. In some cases, earning income can also enable children to eat better, or to pay school-related expenses. Understanding children's perception of their work is important in isolating such work from unacceptable work.

7. SCF recognises that while children may work for different reasons in the South and the North, in both contexts they may face exploitation and risks to their health and education. Not enough is known about the connection between poverty and child work in the North, particularly unpaid work. However, it appears that in the North, poverty is a relatively less important cause of child work. Other motivations such as having an independent income source, enhancing future job prospects and developing future job prospects appear more significant. Poorer children may, however, face more hazardous and exploitative working conditions than more affluent children.

8. Programming, both on child work issues and in other fields, such as food security or credit and savings schemes, must include a careful analysis of the likely implications of proposed interventions for the workload, conditions and health and welfare of children. A programme which decreases children's workload may not automatically be in their best interests. For example, increased workloads may seem worthwhile to the children concerned where resulting extra income is used on more or better food and health care, or to enable children to attend school. Participatory assessment involving children is necessary.

**SCF takes the following positions on different kinds of interventions relating to child work:**

SCF believes that all action on child work should take working children's perspectives into account and should be in the best interests of the children concerned. It should also be based on equal standards for all children, regardless of class, gender, ethnicity or country of origin. Interventions should work towards the eradication of hazardous and exploitative forms of child work, which jeopardize children's physical, mental, educational or social development and should seek to ensure that any work children undertake assists them to develop socially and educationally.

This requires co-ordinated action, which addresses the fundamental economic and social causes of exploitative and hazardous child work. Because of the complexity of child work issues, actions need to be chosen carefully, often combining different kinds of activities and working at a number of levels. When planning activities, it is critical to think ahead to possible unintended outcomes in order not to inadvertently make working children's lives more difficult. For example, if children are prevented from working and no safe alternative income sources for themselves and their families are available, they may engage in less visible, more dangerous and exploitative work.

- **Advocacy and awareness raising**

Advocacy and awareness raising, drawing on SCF's experience of children's lives and work are particularly important activities for tackling the economic and social causes of hazardous and exploitative child work. SCF therefore believes that projects providing services for working children should be linked with advocacy on related issues and at a number of levels. For example, to address the root causes of poverty, advocacy with donors, international financial institutions, international trade organisations, governments and employers is needed. At the same time, awareness raising at a number of levels is essential, to increase levels of social concern over unacceptable child work, and to communicate specific information to parents, children and employers. Such information needs to cover issues such as: children's rights (both as employees and more broadly); the particular dangers to children of hazardous and exploitative work; the importance of working children's access to education, health and recreation; and the existence of special programmes for child workers.

- **Strategies to address poverty**

SCF believes that addressing poverty and inequality is critical in reducing the need for children to work. This can and should take place on a number of levels, and with a range of institutions. Actions may include direct responses to the needs of working and non-working children and their families (for example, through credit and savings or micro enterprise programmes); working with employers and trade unions to improve working conditions (for example, to increase wages and job security for adults and to reduce children's working hours to enable children to combine school and employment); and advocacy on the root causes of poverty with donors, governments, international financial institutions and other organisations. Issues for advocacy include trade; economic policy; employment legislation and practice; and government expenditure and service provision.

- **Support services for working children**

SCF believes that the quality of working children's lives can be significantly improved through support services for working children, such as non-formal education, drop-in centres, feeding schemes, programmes to help children find safer means of generating income, and through facilitating the development of working children's organisations. Employers of children can play a role through, for example, workplace education programmes, and by improving working conditions for all employees. NGOs, community-based organisations, governments and international organisations can work with employers to help them implement such changes. However, such activities alone cannot address the roots of working children's disadvantage and must be combined with co-ordinated advocacy and action at national and international level.

- **Regulation**

SCF believes that legislation can be an important tool for addressing problems related to child work - when enforced. However, the enforcement of certain laws may not be in the best interests of working children. For example, enforcing laws criminalising street vending can push children into more dangerous activities. The focus should be on legislation which protects rather than punishes working children. It is essential to accompany this by sensitising enforcement personnel to the reasons why children work and to working children's needs.

- **Elimination**

a. **Trade-relatedmeasures**

SCF believes that where working conditions are extremely exploitative or hazardous and attempts to instigate alternatives have failed, boycotts may be justified. However, the focus on traded products can result in such sanctions targeting sectors where working conditions are less hazardous and exploitative than in non-export sectors and non-industrial employment. In the absence of alternatives, trade sanctions can therefore push children into worse working conditions. To avoid this, it is critical to plan such programmes in consultation with working children. Codes of conduct and schemes certifying that products are made without children's labour need to form part of programmes which facilitate families' access to other sources of income, and children's access to education. Because much production for export is carried out at home or in small informal sector units, monitoring mechanisms are often particularly difficult to establish. However, monitoring systems which both ensure suppliers' compliance with such programmes, and examine the impact on children are essential. Any trade-related measures should be part of a wider strategy, seeking to eliminate hazardous and exploitative employment in all sectors.

b. **Rescue of children from workplaces**

SCF supports "rescues" where children are engaged in hazardous, exploitative and

unacceptable work. In such instances, a well thought out follow-up programme, designed in conjunction with working children, their families and communities is critical. This may involve family-tracing, education, alternative income-generating schemes and awareness-raising. Associated measures to address the root causes of children's involvement in such work are also vital.

- **Education**

SCF believes that universal primary education is necessary but insufficient as a sole strategy to eliminate unacceptable forms of child work. Improvements in the quality and relevance of education, increased provision in remote areas and reductions in the costs to families of sending children to school are likely also to have significant impact in extending children's access to education, and reducing the time they spend working. Sensitive scheduling of school timetables and calendars to coincide with hours of part-time or seasonal work can enable many working children to attend school and reduce the likelihood of their engaging full-time in hazardous or exploitative occupations. Special programmes may be needed to increase girls' access to education. Early childhood education may be important in familiarising children with the benefits of education, and reducing the chance that they later drop out.

# Section 1
# Introduction

This paper is concerned with both remunerated and unremunerated work performed by children. The phrase 'child labour'[1] has widespread connotations of sweatshops, factories and mines, or children working on the streets. However, a focus on these visible forms of work can obscure the complexity of the issue and sectors and activities involving many more children. For example, the Indian Census of 1981 found that 86.4 per cent of working children were employed in agriculture and allied activities in rural areas.[2] This ignores the almost ubiquitous unremunerated work performed by children, particularly girls, for their families which the ILO estimates constitutes 80 per cent of children's work (OECD, 1996). This discussion therefore considers all activities carried out by children, either for direct economic gain, to contribute to household well-being or to enable other people, usually family members to become economically active.

Comprising ethical, economic, social and political issues, child work evokes a number of strong responses. The complexity of the issue relates both to these factors and to the enormous variety of activities performed by children and adults, for direct or indirect economic gain, or for household maintenance. Positions on children's work derive from standpoints on what the state of childhood is and ought to be; and its implications for activities children undertake; distinctions between labour and work; assessments of hazards specific to, or more severe for children than adults and analysis of the reasons why children work.

The discussion in this paper derives primarily from experience in South Asia and Latin America and to a lesser extent, the Caribbean and South-East Asia. Relatively little documentation is available from Africa and the Middle East, though some recent studies and increasing interest in the issue are starting to redress the balance. Recognising that children work worldwide, though often for different reasons in the North and the South, the paper also makes reference to child work in Europe and North America.

This paper is based on a comprehensive review of the considerable body of literature which now exists on child work and an analysis of SCF's programmatic experience. It also draws on the experience of other donors and the private sector and particularly that of governments and NGOs which is more widely documented. There are, however, some major shortfalls in documentation and analysis and these are elaborated in section 5 (recommendations). Overall, there is a lack of systematic studies of children's work and particularly the work rural children do for their families.[3] This bias reflects both an undervaluing of the work children do, because their work is assumed to be less valuable than that performed by adults (Nieuwenhuys, 1994) and of unpaid work, which is often seen as of secondary importance to paid work. The tendency of researchers and activists to concentrate on visible urban or industrial forms of child work rather than on less visible and less easily addressed aspects and on action rather than documentation exacerbates this trend. The other major shortfall is a widespread lack of evaluation of the impact of interventions relating to child work. This means that the discussion of interventions (Section 4) in particular, has had to draw on reports of varying quality, which often assume, rather than demonstrate, a beneficial impact on working children's lives. More critical evaluations of programme experience are therefore a priority.

This paper explores several dimensions of children's work: ethical positions on the issue; the complex reasons why children work; attempts to distinguish harmful and less harmful work; the variety of kinds of work and conditions they are involved in; experience in tackling the issue; and recommendations for future work. The Appendices discuss a framework and criteria for assessing interventions (I-III); the nature of hazards and forms of exploitation working children face (IV) and international legislation relating to child work (V).

## Scale and importance of children's work

Estimates of children's economic activity and attempts to determine its value are beset with problems and have often rested on definitions of work which exclude unremunerated activity. Likewise, the exclusion of children's work from most national accounts makes assessments of its scale and value more difficult. ILO surveys in Ghana, India, Indonesia and Senegal found that on average 25 per cent of children aged 5-14 were engaged in some form of economic activity.[4] Of these, the majority were aged 10-14, though up to 20 per cent of working children in the survey were aged under 10 in Ghana and Senegal (ILO, 1995). An overview of studies of children working in the UK suggest that by age 16, between 63 and 77 per cent of children have had a job, as have 15-26 per cent of 11 year olds (Hobbs, Lindsay and McKechnie, 1996). Assessments of the value of children's contribution to household income range from negligible, to cases of families being supported by children's work.[5]

Children engage in a wide range of work. These include employment in factories, shops, mines and brick-kilns, as agricultural, construction or domestic workers; vending, scavenging, sex work and participating in household production, gathering fuel and water and caring for siblings. They may work for employers, their families or themselves for remuneration, to pay back a debt or to assist a relative or friend. Children may work out of their own volition, or may be compelled to do so by a relative or employer; in some cases they may be trafficked under false pretences and forced to work. Work conditions range from those which stimulate mental and social development and help children learn new skills to conditions of extreme health hazard, or where children face intimidation and physical or sexual violence.

Given that children work in such a range of occupations and under such varying conditions, the place of work in children's lives varies enormously. Some children may work a few hours a week while others work round the clock for days at a time. Most working children live with their families. Others live in institutions or at workplaces, through their own choice or because they are not allowed to leave, or on the street. Some attend school; others do not. All strategies to assist working children need to take the diversity of experience in their working and non-working lives into account.

## Definitions of children and childhood

The model of childhood implicit in debates about child work and in some policy and programming related to children and work, is derived from several sources. Northern and Southern elite, middle class and western values, and notions of children working as 'deviant' from 'normal childhood', have all been instrumental in determining a dominant model used by policy-makers. The ideal of childhood as a period of up to eighteen years dedicated to learning and play, without economic responsibilities, bears little relation to the experiences of most of the world's children and obscures the benefits certain work can have for children's development (Edwards, 1996; Ennew, 1994). It also obscures working children's responsibility and independence. Many young people

> "work for their living and may be supporting parents, grandparents, siblings, a partner or even their own children; care for younger children, of employers, of parents, and often of their own" ( Ennew, 1994:10-11).

Additionally, in most societies transitions to adulthood are complex, involving a slow taking on of responsibility in different areas at different times. Adult behaviour is often expected at puberty for girls but considerably later for boys.[6] This paper is particularly concerned with the work of children and young people under 14-15, the age at which, in many countries, compulsory education ends and wage employment is allowed. This often meshes with the customary start of adulthood. Nevertheless, the issues facing young workers

between the age of 15 and 18 should not be ignored.

While the concept of childhood embodied in international legislation and existing policy on children is problematic, constructing children as mini adults with identical capacities to adults would be equally unhelpful. While children make decisions and carry out activities in their own right and are not necessarily dependent or lacking in responsibility (Boyden, 1990; Ennew, 1994), it is critical to keep sight of the ways in which children's experiences diverge from those of adults. These include children's relative powerlessness, the ease with which children can be exploited compared to adults and some of the implications of their physical, mental and emotional development. This clarification of distinguishing aspects of childhood is important for assessing the effects of work on children.

## Debate on children's economic activities

### The child work and labour debate

International policy on working children has until recently rested on a distinction between acceptable child work and unacceptable child labour. Child work is understood as work performed for the child's family, a part of the socialisation process, and as light work which does not impede children's school attendance. This contrasts with child labour, defined as work performed usually for an employer outside the family, which may prevent school attendance and may involve hazardous tasks, long hours and low pay. Such perspectives can lead to the position that

> "work is all right (sic) so long as it is unpaid; children may work when they do not need to (for 'pocket money') but not when they need to; children may help their parents' income-earning efforts (and gain pride and satisfaction from it) if they own a family enterprise, but not if they are property-less wage workers. Who is listening to children here?" (White, 1994:47).

The divergence between official and many children's views of acceptable and unacceptable work are summarized in Figure 1 which follows.

**Figure 1: Chart to indicate differing views of child work**

| A child's view: a problem | A child's view: OK if not dangerous |
|---|---|
| An official view: acceptable | An official view: Unacceptable |
| Reproductive (domestic) | Productive (income-generating) |
| At home (helping at home) | Outside the home |
| Unpaid | Paid |
| Small scale | Large scale |

*Source derived from White (1994)*

Recently, conceptualising children's work on a continuum ranging from completely unacceptable activity at one end, to beneficial work at the other end has gained ground in policy circles (Flowers, Friedman and Reichenberg, 1995; CWC, 1995). Where work lies on the continuum would be assessed on criteria of exploitation, hazard, risk of damage to children's development and opportunities foregone, rather than whether work is paid or unpaid. Such criteria are discussed in detail in Appendix IV. This may be a more fruitful way to analyse the negative aspects of child work, rather than drawing a distinction between work and labour.

Deriving such criteria and defining where a particular form of work sits on the continuum is controversial and depends considerably on an

**Figure 2: Continuum of forms of work from acceptable to unacceptable**

organisation's or an individual's ethical standpoint. It is critical that working children's views of what constitutes hazard, exploitation or unacceptable foreclosing of opportunities are taken into account. However, neither working children nor their families may have access to information concerning long-term, or invisible workplace hazards, nor may they be aware of alternatives. Such criteria therefore need to be developed both in collaboration with working children, and using scientific/medical knowledge.

**Ethical positions**

Three main positions on children and work can be distinguished. These are premised on children working for an employer rather than as unpaid family or self-employed workers and also on children having functional, family-based social support structures. In practice, most agencies incorporate aspects of all three positions into their work.

i 'Children should not work for wages, though assisting their families with light household duties is acceptable. Children ought to be in school and recreating, not working'. This draws on a view of childhood as a one-off chance for the development of healthy, educated, happy human beings, which should not be compromised by work or other 'adult' responsibilities. Work and education are usually seen as antithetical, and interventions aim to remove children from the labour force and enable them to attend school. In general, any beneficial effects of working are downplayed in comparison to the dangers and 'complete abolition of child labour' is the goal. Proponents of this viewpoint generally discount the significance of children's work for their own or their families' livelihoods and children's perceptions and preferences concerning their work. A major problem with this position is that the interventions deriving from it rarely address the root causes of child work, but focus on action to stop children working, without putting alternatives for those children into place. Thus they can have unintended negative effects on working children (see Section 4). The foremost proponents of this view tend to be adult labour activists in north and south, such as the Asian-American Free Labour Institute (AAFLI). This has led to the suspicion that they are also allied with protectionist interests.

ii. 'It is undesirable that children have to work, but necessary for many poor children to do so for family survival or to meet their own expenses (e.g. schooling or dowries)'. Some activists make the distinction between children working in a context where the entire family is engaged in productive activities (regrettable but permissable) and those where adults are unemployed and effectively being supported by their children's labour (unacceptable).[7] Proponents also recognise that some work may be beneficial to children as preparation for the future through learning useful skills and can increase their self-esteem and social skills. This position leads to a focus on improving children's working conditions while aiming for the elimination of the most exploitative forms of work and addressing the reasons why children work. This represents SCF's overall position and that of UNICEF, ILO and the UK DFID.

iii. 'Children's paid work is not necessarily undesirable and like adults they have the right to work for wages'[8] This work should meet certain minimum conditions as discussed in section 3 and in detail in Appendix IV. As with the previous position, the positive aspects (beyond the economic) of some child work are recognised. Interventions focus on advocacy to improve labour rights and conditions for all workers, with additional provisions for children in some cases. This position is propounded by working children's movements worldwide and particularly in Latin America. Those who reject the 'children's right to work' argument observe that making work one of children's rights is in effect codifying poor people's lack of alternatives as a right (Thijs, 1995).

While avoiding the problems of using a universal ideal of childhood as embodied in the first position, the second and third positions may be open to the charge of double standards: that middle-class policy-makers, particularly, but not exclusively in the North, are tolerating standards for poor children in the South that they would not accept for their own children, or for poor children in their own societies.[9] Rather than seeing these three ethical positions as separate approaches it may be more helpful to apply aspects of them to formulating policies and programmes in different situations.[10] For an organisation such as SCF whose overall vision is that children should only work out of their own choice, in ways which assist them to develop educationally, socially and give them useful skills and experience for the future, and not in hazardous, exploitative or educationally limiting occupations, action both to address the reasons why children work, and to improve their working

conditions is necessary. Where working conditions do not compromise children's development, health or education and where children themselves want to work, the 'right to work' argument may be more compelling.

# Section 2
# Causes

There is increasing recognition that the reasons why children work are many, complex and context-specific and result from the interaction of micro- and macroeconomic, environmental, social, cultural and political factors. Demand for children's labour in domestic and export-oriented markets arises from: their perceived docility, the fact that they can be paid lower wages than adults; the fact that in many contexts they have no labour rights and in some cases their small size, which allegedly makes them suitable for very fine work. The supply of children's labour relates to poverty and vulnerability; poor educational services; lack of social security mechanisms, gender- and age-specific characteristics of particular labour markets; and consumerist pressures. The relation of these sets of external opportunities and constraints to parents' and children's wishes for the use of their time results in decisions regarding whether children work or not. The causes outlined below relate both to supply and demand factors and in some cases a combination of both.

### Macro-level poverty and inequality

We are unable to discuss the wide-ranging causes of poverty here. In all countries, local political and cultural factors set the context in which poverty is articulated. There is considerable evidence that wide-scale poverty is the main reason why children in the South work. This derives from, among other factors, structural inequality in access to assets (such as land, capital and technology) to education and health services and the absence of social security systems. In many contexts, economic crises and resultant market-oriented adjustment and transition policies have tended to exacerbate structural inequality, often increasing the supply of and demand for children's labour. At the same time trade liberalisation and the increasing internationalisation of production have created new markets for unskilled, cheap labour, often including that of children.

In the North, the connections between poverty and child work are less clear. There is some evidence that poorer children are less likely to work for remuneration as they live in areas where the demand for children's casual labour is less (inner cities, rural areas) and they cannot afford transportation to areas with greater opportunities. More affluent children may be "more 'attractive' employees", or have better connections and networks which they use to find jobs (Morrow, 1996a). Poorer children who work may also be more vulnerable to exploitation - there is some evidence that working class children with jobs work longer hours for lower rates of pay than their middle class counterparts (Hobbs et al, 1993, cited in McKechnie et al 1996).

### Adjustment and transition programmes

It is not always possible to isolate the effects of adjustment and transition policies from broader economic trends. However, it is clear that the structural and fiscal problems of some economies necessitate adjustment measures. However, it is also undeniable that the social impacts of such policies have often been severe. Common elements of adjustment and transition programmes include: increased prices for basic goods through reduction or abolition of subsidies; retraction of the public sector and privatisation of state or publicly-owned resources; trade liberalisation and in some cases a relaxation of labour legislation, including abolition of minimum wages. Such deregulation has in many contexts facilitated the development of a highly capitalised entrepreneurial elite,[11] who had or were able to acquire assets at the inception of liberalisation policies. At the same time the standard of living of the majority has declined. This includes people retrenched from the public sector who have been unable to find new work, people who depended on public service provision which has declined, or those formerly protected by aspects of 'social safety nets', such as food subsidies or direct payments. Frequently, these costs of adjustment are passed on to households, and within households to women and children whose labour is increased to meet demands for both household welfare and income (Harper, 1996).

For example, in Mongolia, women retrenched from recently privatised or closed factories have had to leave their villages and with their children seek work as traders or sex workers on the streets of Ulan Bataar. One of the effects of the privatisation of herds has been large numbers of children, particularly boys, dropping out of school to help with family livestock management (Harper, 1995: 6-10). Similarly in Nicaragua, where state-owned banana plantations have been privatised, as parents have lost their jobs, they have taken children out of school (Green, forthcoming). In other adjusting economies in Latin America an increase in children vending on the streets, washing car screens at intersections, shining shoes, or engaging in other kinds of informal sector activity is noticeable since the implementation of adjustment measures from the mid-1980s (Green, 1995). In Kyrgyzstan, a similar increase in children working as vendors has been observed since the country's adjustment programme was launched in 1992 (Howell, 1996).

Raised prices for basic goods can significantly increase the need for all household members to generate income or contribute to household production, particularly in urban areas. In Zimbabwe:

> 'poorer households are more vulnerable to price increases such as has been the trend under the SAP. Under such conditions, there is great pressure for households to involve children in household labour during peak seasonal periods in order to maximise household earning' (Raftopoulos and Dube,1995:70).

Another effect of raised prices is to increase the demands on household labour to substitute bought products with home-made ones, or to produce goods for sale. For example, in South-west Nigeria women and children now spend more time and energy making soap rather than buying it (Cornwall, 1996). Another frequent effect of adjustment programmes is that women have to forfeit household activities in order to earn more money. This may result in older girls dropping out of school to take over the full care of younger siblings or to fulfil a range of other household activities. For example, in Tanzania school drop out rates are estimated to be 15 per cent higher for girls than boys (Tibaijuka, 1992:9).

A macro-level political and economic shock, such as a trade embargo may have similar effects. By reducing the demand for a country's exports, adult employment is likely to decrease. Thus there is increased need for all household members to generate income. In Haiti for example:

> 'the social misery resulting from the embargo has frequently given rise to the use of children for work. Very small children are frequently rented or forcibly assigned outside the home to work as servants or even prostitutes (Perrault, 1996:4).

#### Decline in social sector spending

Many governments implementing adjustment and transition programmes have made cuts in education, health, social security and infrastructural provision (such as subsidised water supply) as part of cost-sharing schemes designed to increase the proportion of the costs of such services financed by consumers. A major problem with cost-sharing strategies is a general failure to appreciate the substantial existing hidden costs for users. For example, nominally free schooling entails the costs of uniforms, books, supplies, and 'voluntary' contributions, as well as the opportunity costs of sending a child to school rather than having them work (Boyden, 1994; Anker and Melkas, 1995). With cost-sharing additional fees are often levied and the increase in direct costs of education to families, in addition to the substantial hidden costs, may tip the balance between a child's going to school and staying home to work for their family, or going out to work. In Mongolia for example, the removal of subsidies on food for children attending school has, among other factors, contributed to high drop-out rates from primary schools (Harper, 1995). Additionally, diminished operational

budgets may reduce the resources available and result in increased class sizes. Where the quality of education declines children and parents may see work as a more rational option.

Cost-sharing in the health sector may have significant implications for child work. Where a breadwinner or primary carer falls sick or is disabled, the pressures on other household members to generate income are often intensified (see also section 2.3). Increased user fees, as well as cuts in service provision which increase the time needed to obtain health care may result in sick people foregoing treatment. This may entrench household vulnerability and the pressures on children to contribute to household income and to take charge of household domestic work (SCF, 1995a).

Where 'social safety nets' are diminished or abolished, the vulnerability of poor households and the incidence of children working may also increase. The introduction of user charges for water supply in parts of urban Africa has increased the pressure on women and girls to obtain 'free' water from more distant and often dirtier sources (Tibaijuka, 1992). In Mongolia the abolition of child benefits for large families which the pre-transition state had provided to encourage population growth, has in the context of high unemployment, resulted in a rise in women and children working on the streets of Ulan Bataar (Harper, 1996). In the North there may be some connection between the incidence of children working in hazardous and exploitative conditions and access to social welfare provision. For example, the recognisedly high incidence of illegal immigrant children working in the US may reflect their lack of access to health services and social security provision. Likewise, where public assistance for caring is not available, there may be extra demands on children's (particularly girls') unpaid labour to care for relatives. Contrasting this with child work in established welfare states such as Scandinavia might illuminate the significance of such provision.

**Structure of labour markets**

In certain sectors there is a demand for child workers because they are children. Many employers in the North and the South prefer child workers because they are cheaper to hire than adults. It is accepted in most societies that children can be paid less than adults and because most child work is illegal and because children cannot normally form or belong to labour unions, they are unlikely to be able to engage in collective action to drive up wage rates. While it is often argued that children are particularly suited to certain kinds of work because of their small size and 'nimble fingers', there is some evidence that adults can perform such work, for example, carpet-knotting to a higher standard (Maybin, 1994). As in the south-east Asian electronics industry, where this argument has been used to justify the concentration of young women in low-paid work (Elson and Pearson, 1982) normally other attributes of the workers such as perceived docility or commanding lower wages are more attractive than dexterity.

Specific attributes of particular groups of children may also be important. For example, in domestic service where one person has intimate contact with a family, women may prefer to engage pre-pubescent girls rather than adult women. Young girls can usually be paid less than older girls or adult women but importantly are perceived as unlikely to initiate affairs with household men. Older girls and women are perceived as a great risk in this regard in contexts as diverse as Bangladesh (Rahman, 1995) and Nigeria.[12]

It is widely held that where children comprise a significant proportion of the labour force, the lower wages they command drive down adult wage rates and can lead to adult unemployment (c.f. Weiner, 1991). Under such circumstances the demand for children may be self-perpetuating. As children become the labour force of choice because of their cheapness, certain jobs become established as 'children's jobs'. The need for children to work for the family or an employer, can also be cemented

where adults' wage-earning opportunities are minimal, or where wages are too low to support a family. For example, the carpet industry which was introduced into the Thar desert of Pakistan in the 1970s, and after initially employing adult men, has become established as a 'boys' sector. There are few other sources of income in the area, and so many children, particularly scheduled caste Hindu boys, work full-time as carpet knotters (SCF, 1993).

The validity of the argument that child work undercuts adult employment opportunities depends on a number of factors: the nature of specific labour markets; the kinds of activities in which children are employed; the scale of adult employment opportunities; the elasticity[13] of adult and child labour and the existence of quality alternatives for children. Women's formal sector employment may reduce the demand for formal sector employment of children (Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995). There is some evidence of this in Sri Lanka and Kerala, though the effects of strong rural trade unions in fighting for living adult wages, and compulsory primary education policies are also important factors. However, in both North and South, women's formal sector employment may increase the domestic responsibilities of household girls (Solberg, 1988 cited in Morrow, 1996b; Rahman, 1995); women working outside the home may also hire girls as domestic workers (Rahman, 1995).

#### Implications of internationalisation of production for child work

Drives towards trade liberalisation often, though not exclusively, associated with adjustment programmes, increase the need for products to be competitive in international markets. Increasingly reducing labour costs is seen as the primary way to achieve this and thus the demand for cheap unregulated labour such as that of women and children may increase (Jamil, 1995). The more marginal the enterprise, the greater the importance of reducing labour costs and the greater the desirability of children's labour. In order to attract international investment and to stimulate the competitiveness of domestic industry, existing labour legislation, including child labour legislation, is deliberately suspended or not enforced. In industries where a skilled rather than cheap labour force is critical, as is often the case as an industry becomes consolidated, there is some evidence from Bangladesh (Leipziger and Gunn, 1995) and East Asia (ILO, 1996) that the demand for children as employees decreases.

The abolition of minimum wages can reduce adult earnings to a level where it is necessary for children to earn to supplement household income. Where women work long shifts in factories the demands on girls to take over domestic work may be greater. If women cannot obtain free childcare from female relatives, including girls, or cannot afford domestic workers, they may need to take children to work with them. Thus children may start to work to assist their mothers to pass the time, or to earn some money themselves. The incidence of girls working in garment factories in Bangladesh relates to parents' fears for girls' safety if left at home as well as to poverty (Boyden, 1995). In some industries there is evidence that young women and teenage girls are deliberately targeted as workers in such sectors, due to their perceived docility and expectations of their sexual availability to male supervisors.[14]

Increasingly, competitiveness is achieved through subcontracting to cut overheads. This has led to a growth in homeworking and production in small unregulated units, particularly in the garment and shoe industries. Because it is possible to combine childcare (particularly for older children) and income-generation and because the kinds of tasks subcontracted out are stereotypically 'female', the vast majority of homeworkers are women. Work is usually contracted to women on a piece-rate basis and pay is extremely low - normally lower than in factory-based production. This increases the pressure on households to produce as much as possible and children are often expected to join in to increase income earned (HomeNet, 1996:3). Young girls in particular, may also be expected to




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take charge of domestic work, while adults and older children continue production. However, in that it can provide employment opportunities for women who would not otherwise be able to enter the labour force, many women view it as a positive trend.

### Household poverty and vulnerability

Poverty and its relationship to structural inequality, social and economic policies and environmental and macro-economic trends, is a major reason why children in the South work. For poor people marginal increases in cash income may be critical in enabling them to withstand shocks and stresses which make demands on their income or reduce their capacity for self-provisioning. Thus, even where children's contribution to household income or production appears insignificant, it may be essential as a hedge against vulnerability, for example, by maintaining a steady income stream during lean times. Particularly in rural areas children's contribution to household production can be critical throughout the year. For example, in rural Bangladesh, Cain (1977) calculates that by age thirteen non-schoolgoing children work as long as, or longer hours than adults; boys in crop production, animal husbandry, wage work, trading (boys) and girls in housework and food processing. Non-schoolgoing boys can compensate for their own cumulative consumption by the age of 15, and for one sister by the age of 22. The economic value of children's work, particularly in rural areas, can therefore be very considerable.

Children in poverty and in families facing impoverishment experience a range of conditions which are likely to threaten their wellbeing. These may include having to do more, or more dangerous work, withdrawing from school, a reduction in, or complete denial of expenditure on health care, insufficient food for their growth needs, or entering bonded labour contracts with their families or on their own. Of these, working more may be the best option or 'the least of ten possible evils'.[15]

### The impact of shocks and stresses

Processes of impoverishment or displacement (for example through conflict, environmental disaster, large-scale development schemes such as dams or the impact of HIV/AIDS) which result in the destruction of, or need to sell productive assets, such as land and stock, can increase the need for household members including children to enter labour markets. They can also increase household workloads by intensifying the need to make use of common property resources which may be located at some distance from the household. This may have particular implications for children whose tasks often include collection of fuelwood, fodder and water. In rural Nepal for example, flooding can increase the distance girls have to go to collect water, fuel and fodder and therefore the necessity that they work rather than attending school. The deterioration of common property resources such as forests or water can have similar effects, as gathering such resources becomes more time and energy consuming.

Increasing livelihood insecurity deriving from loss of employment or harvest failure, among other causes, can increase the pressures on households, and push children into wage labour (Johnson, Hill and Ivan-Smith, 1995:28). The following case study drawn from 'Samroeng', a picture story for awareness-raising with working children illustrates the impact of harvest failure. For people without other collateral, pledging their own and/or their children's labour may be the only way to obtain credit (Sattaur, 1993); high interest rates for informal credit can exacerbate the need for children to work to repay loans or may result in their term as bonded labourers being increased.[16]

**Case study - the impact of harvest failure on rural children in Thailand**

When the harvest failed in a village in North-East Thailand, labour recruiters visited Samroeng's family and offered his parents a lump sum to be paid off by one of their children going to Bangkok to work. The family agreed that, given their lack of cash or food this was the best course of action. With several other village children, Samroeng was sent to a factory making neon lights. The children worked very long hours, were locked into the factory premises, were not allowed out and received very little food. As Samroeng's family situation deteriorated two of his siblings joined him. After a few months Samroeng contracted a work-related disease and the factory sent him home, where he died.[17]

Family structure may be an important factor in deciding which children in a poor family will work and in what forms of work. For example, where an adult breadwinner is absent or unable to generate enough income for a family, children may need to work. A study conducted by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour (1985) cited in Graham-Brown (1991:52) found that reliance on children's labour was particularly marked in poor female-headed households. Among such households, one-fifth of working children were under ten years of age.

Which children work, and in what ways, is likely to depend on local economic opportunities and social norms regarding education, work, and particularly gender. For example, more child street vendors in Latin America are boys than girls, since street work is often perceived as more hazardous for girls and girls' labour is needed at home. On the other hand, as in purdah societies, girls may start to work in public very young, since they will have to work from home on reaching puberty. For example, a study in Bangalore India, found that parents sent girls out to work earlier than boys since girls would have to 'retire' from the labour market at puberty, whereas boys would have longer to contribute to their parents' income and so started work later. 42 per cent of working girls, compared to 33 per cent of working boys had started between the ages of 6 and 9 (cited in Boyden and Myers, 1995:9).

The oldest girl or girls in a family often shoulder much of the burden of household work at a young age; subsequent girls may work considerably less than their older sisters. Likewise, where income-generating activities are primarily a male domain, a boy with few or no brothers is likely to have to work harder than those with several brothers. In many contexts oldest children take on the responsibility of working to contribute to younger children's schooling; in other cases the ways in which specific children work relates to particular children's aptitudes and preferences, as well as birth order and gender.

Changes in family structure may constitute a major stress as they significantly affect the income and labour resources available to a household and thus the activities undertaken by children. Loss of household income may mean that a child needs to give up school and start earning or to work harder. Likewise, the loss of a major domestic worker, usually a mother or older sister, through illness, marriage, or entry into the labour market, may mean that a younger girl has to stay home and look after siblings and the house. For example, children working in carpet factories in Kathmandu, Nepal anticipated the following changes in their families' workloads in their villages:

> 'My sister will have to do my work in the village now. Perhaps she might have to spend more time collecting fodder and fuelwood because I am not there. I don't think my brother will be affected very much (Buddhi Maya Tamang, a twelve-year old girl).

'They will have to work more now that I've gone: ploughing, digging and ooking after the animals' (Maita Singh Waiba, a fourteen-year old boy, talking of his brother and father). Cited in Johnson, Hill and Ivan-Smith (1995:62).

The death, desertion or temporary or chronic sickness or disability of a main breadwinner may increase the burdens on remaining family members including children. For example, Pryer (1989:52) found that in a slum in Khulna, Bangladesh, the incidence of women and children participating in the labour force was considerably higher in households with an incapacitated breadwinner than in the slum overall. 80 per cent of women in such households and 40 per cent of children aged 5-15 contributed to the household budget.

HIV infection in a family may have significant implications for children's workloads. Children may have to care for dying relatives. They may need to enter formal or informal labour markets or to farm because they are left without economic and social support; or if fostered by extended family members they may be expected to work in addition to, or instead of attending school. Furthermore, starting work may increase children's, particularly girls', risk of contracting HIV if they engage in sex work to supplement other livelihood strategies.[18] As the incidence of HIV/AIDS increases, particularly in Central and Southern Africa and increasingly in parts of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, this trend is likely to spread.

## Social attitudes to childhood and work

### Economic desires and personal preferences

In parts of the world, both North and South, consumer pressures and new definitions of relative poverty and affluence are becoming an increasingly important reason why children work. The cash obtained by children's work may allow parents or children to purchase items which demonstrate their social status and ownership of certain items may confer prestige.

Many children want to work for reasons including: to earn money for themselves, to help their families, to improve future job prospects or to increase their self-esteem and others' respect for them, or feel it is their duty to do so (see following case study). In the UK, a study of children in Birmingham and rural Cambridgeshire revealed that the wish to earn money, the contribution work makes to children's sense of self-esteem and a perceived need to improve future job prospects are critical reasons why children work (Morrow, 1996a).

Some children also comment that their status within the family is enhanced and they are beaten less often when they are earning. For example, Juanito, a nine-year old Mexican street vendor explains:

'Since I was little I've run away from home. I didn't like it because they beat me a lot. I started selling papers and cleaning car windows at the corner. I earned good money and took it to my mother; that's why, when they wanted to hit me, she would defend me. She used to tell my stepfather that I wasn't lazy or bad, that he shouldn't hit me, because I was bringing a few pennies into the house' (Arenal, 1991, cited in Green, forthcoming).

**Case Study: Impact of consumerist pressures on Thai girls.**

In parts of South-East Asia, where a daughter's employment in the sex industry for a few years can buy such desirable consumer items as a fridge, parents may decide that this is an acceptable trade-off, or they may be unaware precisely what work a girl is going to do. In northern Thailand, for example, the practice of girls going south to engage is sex work to repay the debt of gratitude they owe their parents, is so strongly institutionalised, since it often goes back generations, that girls who refuse to do so are considered selfish, disobedient and ungrateful (Greenwood, 1996:48).

White (1996:4) argues that

> 'the globalisation of mass media and lifestyles is turning the world's children (as well as the world's adults) into a new generation of consumers or would-be consumers of a wide range of ideas, products and lifestyles.... Through globalisation the children of the relatively poor in all societies are being made more acutely conscious of their 'relative poverty'.... We can thus speak of a new kind of child labour, alongside the cases that are better known and publicised - of children forced into labour by parents or unscrupulous labour recruiters - there are many children all over the world, who simply decide that they need to earn more money'

However, while many children want to work others resent it where work interferes with schooling, or where they find work degrading. It is important that children are asked about their preferences, rather than assumptions being made on their behalf.

**Social valuation of childhood**

An important line of analysis particularly but not exclusively in Latin America, relates child work to a problem of an undervaluation of childhood by adults, both parents and policy-makers and rejects poverty as an over-arching explanatory factor. Thus child work is seen primarily as the result of parents' ignorance of the importance of education and leisure in childhood, though set in the context of poverty. In purdah societies such as Bangladesh, a family's honour might be more compromised by women and older girls working outside the home than by a younger child working (Blanchet, 1996). Strong social acceptance by middle-class professionals, policy-makers and politicians, of poor children working, contributing to a lack of political will to address negative aspects of child work, is perceived to compound the problem.

The need to escape familial physical and sexual violence is often cited as an important reason for children's involvement in street-based vending or sex work. For example, a survey of child sex workers in Bogota, Colombia conducted by the Bogota Chamber of Commerce found that 24.3 per cent left their homes to work on the streets because of physical abuse, 17.8 per cent because of family conflicts and 15.8 per cent because of emotional abuse (Gutierrez, Mojica and Oakley, 1995). Many of these children had engaged in other occupations before starting sex work. Likewise, in the UK, there is some evidence that the majority of girls apprehended as underage sex workers are in local authority care (i.e. have been physically or sexually abused, or neglected, and lack a stable home life).[19]

In other contexts positive valuation of children working to learn the skills they require in later life, or to occupy their time, develop a sense of responsibility and prevent them being 'led astray by delinquents', or because work seems a better option than low-quality education, are important reasons why children work. Such attitudes are likely to be more common among parents with low levels of education (ILO, 1996).

Important as it is to recognise the role of social attitudes to childhood it is also critical to set these in their broader context. Children who take up work because of parental abuse or neglect are overwhelmingly from poor backgrounds. As Jamil (1995:2) argues:

> 'in a period of worsening economic conditions for the poor in Pakistan, the moment children begin to walk and talk they are perceived by the family, society and state as potential resources which can be supplied to the market to learn a skill, no matter how demeaning and outdated, to eventually earn an income for the household and the national economy. Such a view which dismisses nurturing responsibilities and is replaced with a mentality to exploit its infants and young, reflects a stage of triage (sic) where resources have reached their ultimate levels of depletion.'

## Education and child work

The relationship between education and child work is complicated, and context-specific and relates to: accessibility and quality of education; families' economic circumstances; the range of other options available to children and their perceived future possibilities and social attitudes to education and work, among other factors. These are mediated by age, gender, class and ethnicity.

As where children's health is damaged by working, where work entails that children miss school their income-earning prospects throughout their lives may be lower, with the result that their own children are likely to have to work. For example, a study of Latin American boys found that those who start work between the ages of 13 and 17 receive on average two years' less education than those who start work aged 18-24. This translates to 20 percent lower wages for the rest of their lives - they therefore lose six times more money than they gain by starting work early (CEPAL, 1995, cited in Green, forthcoming). For girls the effects are less pronounced, perhaps because of the generally lower wages they earn as girls and as adult women. Another study in Brazil demonstrates a close relationship between the educational level of parents and children's labour force participation rates - the parents of 80 per cent of child workers surveyed had completed four years primary education, or fewer (Rodrigues dos Santos et al, 1995, cited in ILO, 1996:17). However, the relationship between education, poverty and inter-generational cycles of child work cannot be assumed as it may depend on the quality of education available and specific characteristics of local labour markets.

Many parents and children value education highly and pursue complex 'tactics' involving the education, employment and home or farm-based work of children. For example in El Salvador, many rural parents rotate children through these different occupations aiming for children to learn enough to get jobs outside agriculture in the future, but at the same time ensuring that they contribute enough to household production for basic necessities.[20] Children may also combine school and work on a daily or seasonal basis (see following case studies). While this may allow them to finance their schooling, it may also reduce their ability to concentrate in school and thus undermine the value of attendance. In other contexts, particularly where there is high unemployment among educated youth or there are few opportunities outside agriculture, parents and children may perceive schooling as a waste of time (Amin, 1995; Green, 1995). Parents may also decide to 'sacrifice' the education of one or two children, often girls, and send them to work to contribute to their siblings' education and/or to improve the household's economic situation.

For poor families the costs of children's school attendance are both direct - fees, uniforms, books etc and indirect - the loss of their labour and are often too high for children to attend school. In addition to these reasons children may not enter school or may drop out and take up full-time work on account of:

- *Teachers failing to teach.* Particularly where there are few checks on performance in remote rural areas teachers may only be present at school for a few of the stipulated days in the month. Or they may not actually teach while there.[21] This may relate to low and declining real wages and low levels of motivation among teachers.

- *Low quality of teaching*, related to lack of resources, making school less interesting, challenging and educative than some forms of work.[22]

- *School policies which fail to take account of poverty*, and expel children who have no uniform or shoes, or children's shame that they lack these items, or food to bring to school or lunch money.

- *Perceived irrelevance* of the school curriculum to children's lives and futures. In some areas curricula which take children away from rural areas are disliked by parents, though in others they may be highly valued. In either case, working may appear a more rational alternative. Where curricula are irrelevant parents may consider that attending two or three days per week is sufficient (Ennew and Young, 1982).

- *Repeating classes.* In Jamaica, Brazil and Haiti this is a major reason for children, particularly boys, dropping out so as not to suffer loss of self-esteem by attending school with children considerably younger than themselves. In Mozambique, it is common for parents to have to bribe teachers to ensure that a child is promoted at the end of the year; children of very poor families are unlikely to be able to do so and are more likely to drop out.[23]

- *Language.* Children may not understand the language of instruction because they are from a minority ethnic group, or because it is not their home language and they have been poorly prepared to speak that language.

- *Corporal punishment.* A survey of urban street children in Pakistan found that many had left school because of frequent beatings from teachers (Sudhaar, 1995).

- *Household demand for labour.* Particularly in rural areas the demand for older children's labour especially to assist with farming, herding, the provision of water, fuel and fodder and housework may prevent school attendance, or mean that children only attend irregularly. The oldest children in large families and fostered or adopted children may be under particular pressure to work rather than attending school.

- *Classes may be inconveniently timed* to fit in with children's work responsibilities. In consequence children who do attend may arrive at school late and be beaten or sent or home again.

- *The location of the school* may be too far for children to attend and there may be no subsidised boarding or transport facilities for children from remoter areas. This may be a particular constraint for girls who often face greater restrictions on mobility than boys.

**Case Study: Combining School and Work in Peru and Zimbabwe**

In a study of 211 secondary school pupils at a Zimbabwean farm school, 110 were financing their education by working for the farmer who owned the school (Loewenson, 1991).

A child interviewed in Lima, Peru observed:

'I work in the city of Lima during the summer months. But I come from Huancayo, a large town in the Sierra. I work to put myself through school. Many kids like myself do the same. It is very hard to get jobs in the Sierra.... I have already saved 2,000 soles. With this money I'll buy my uniform, shoes and books. I need more money to pay for my room and board at a family's home near school which is in the Sierra' (Bunster and Chaney, 1985 cited in Boyden, 1994:30).

A study of working children in Lima found that slightly more would like to leave work in order to study exclusively (52.3 per cent) than those who would not (47.7 per cent). Those who did not want to stop working for cash gave the following reasons:

| | |
|---|---|
| To buy tools and uniforms | 33.3% |
| Money needed at home | 32.1% |
| They liked their work | 13.1% |
| No answer | 8.3% |
| Work not a problem | 7.1% |
| Other | 6.1% |

These children identified two principal negative effects of work: lack of time and tiredness.

*Source: Alarcon (1991) cited in Ennew (1995:80-82).*

**Particular biases against girls' education**

In much of the world the pressures on girls to work rather than attending school are particularly strong. However, there are cases where boys' labour is needed for specific activities such as herding stock in rural Lesotho, which result in lower male attendance at primary school. In general, parents may be reluctant to send girls to school or to keep them there beyond a certain age for the following reasons:

- *Parents' belief that it is not worth educating girls* in many cultures. Particularly where resources are scarce, they give priority to educating sons whom they expect will support them in old age and whose household labour as children may be less useful than that of girls. As a result girls are often kept at home to work. For example, a Nepalese girl interviewed in Action Aid's study complained 'my parents want to make their son an IA [a secondary school qualification] and BA but order me to get fodder and fuelwood every day'. (Johnson, Hill and Ivan-Smith, 1995:1).[24]

- *Schooling may be believed to compromise a girl's morals,* particularly after puberty (sometimes even in a single-sex school)[25] or seen as unnecessary because girls are seen to only need to learn how to be good wives and mothers which they can learn from helping their mothers at home.

- *Parents' beliefs that attending school is not in a girl's best interests.* Boyden (1994:20) quotes a Rajasthani mother and sweeper.

  'Why should I waste my time and money sending my daughter to school where she will learn nothing of use... so why not put my girl to work so that she will learn something about our profession as well as be able to cook. My elder girl who is 15 years old will be married soon. Her mother-in-law will put her cleaning latrines somewhere. Too much schooling will only give girls big ideas and then they will be

beaten up by their husbands or abused by their in-laws' (quoted in Karlekar, 1982, cited in Burra,1989:122).

- *Difficulties finding husbands for educated girls*. In Nepal, as elsewhere in South Asia, finding an educated husband for an educated girl can increase the dowry parents have to pay and reduce the pool of eligible husbands. Thus schooling can be perceived to narrow, rather than expand a girl's future options.[26]

- *Lack of opportunities for educated girls and women*. Where gender biases in the labour market mean that unlike men women are unable to get well-paid jobs, women and girls may feel that education is not worthwhile. For example, minority women in northern Thailand complained that since there were no opportunities outside hard farm labour it would have been better not to have known how their lives could have been different.[27]

# Section 3
# Assessing costs and benefits

There is increasing international policy-level consensus on a framework for identifying dangerous and non-dangerous forms of children's work. However, relatively little precise information exists quantifying the risks faced by children in different activities and under different conditions.[28] Common elements of such a framework include identifying: the health and developmental hazards of particular forms of work and specific conditions for children of different ages; the number of hours which provoke exhaustion at different ages and for different tasks; the hours or conditions of work which are likely to reduce children's ability to concentrate at school and thus their educational achievement and definitions of what constitutes exploitation. Two important principles behind this framework are that some forms of work are likely to be more dangerous for children's developing minds and bodies than for adults and that children's education should not be compromised by work.

The ILO argues that pinpointing the most dangerous and exploitative forms of work may be less problematic than often supposed - 'the task of designating children at high risk usually turns out to be easier in practice than theory. Within a given place the most dangerous forms of work and the children involved in them tend to stand out when adequate information is available' (1996:16). Goonesekere (1993) and Burra (1995) on the other hand argue that given the lack of precise information on which to base decisions, policy and action should aim to eliminate all child work. In practice much existing legislation encapsulates assessment of the dangers related to different forms of work.[29]

In recent years as identifying and eliminating the most dangerous forms of work has become a major policy goal, a number of medical and psychological studies have tried to isolate the effects of work on children. Bequele and Myers (1995) cite examples of a number of studies demonstrating children's greater vulnerability than adults to extremes of temperature, radiation, carcinogens, noise and toxic substances. Nevertheless, such information is not available for a number of kinds of work and more research identifying child-specific dangers is needed. Such information needs both to feed into policy and legislation and to be disseminated to working children and their families to increase their capacity to make informed decisions about the risks and benefits of working. While recognising the importance of taking the perceptions of working children and their families concerning acceptable and unacceptable work into account, they may lack detailed scientific knowledge, particularly of health hazards, or may accept exploitation for lack of alternatives and it is vital that scientific studies of health and psychological hazards form an important part of such assessments.

The possible risks children face through working need to be considered in the context of those they would face if not working. These might include greater hunger or malnutrition and decreased access to health care or education and clearly the trade-offs vary considerably on a case by case basis. An important related issue is the extent of children's control over the income they earn, or the products of their labour. While there is some macro-level evidence that where women, rather than men control household income a greater proportion is spent on children's welfare, neither this nor the contention that improvements in household income (either the mother's or the father's) necessarily benefit children should be assumed. For example, girls are often systematically discriminated against in household consumption - even where they have grown or prepared food or earned money, they may receive less food or health care than their brothers or adults. There is some evidence that where children control at least a part of their earnings they are likely to prioritise their own nutrition and education (Ennew, 1994). The other benefits of child work should also be taken into account in making such assessments. In certain kinds of work, these may include the opportunity to develop useful work-related and problem-solving skills and development of the child's sense of responsibility, self-esteem and respect in the community.

Various health hazards and forms of exploitation children may face at work and the opportunities they forego are explored in detail in Appendix IV and summarised below for different sectors of work. In some occupations risks are intrinsic to the activity; in others they are contingent on factors related to the location of the activity or to working conditions. Some are immediate; others long-term.

**Health Hazards**

*Industrial.* Risks include: respiratory diseases; eye problems; finger strain; spinal damage; burns from noxious chemicals or hot substances; the development of cancers; loss of limbs or death from explosives or mining accidents and back strain from transporting heavy loads.

*Agricultural.* Risks include: developing cancers or respiratory diseases and poisoning of the nervous system or burns from agro-chemicals; damage to limbsfrom agricultural machinery; exposure to heat and cold; death or injury fromlandmines in many post-conflict zones.

*Formal service sector.* Risks include: repetitive strain injuries and circulation problems from standing for long hours.

*Household provisioning.* Risks include: spinal injuries from carrying heavy loads of water, fuelwood, other children, or produce; waterborne diseases or attacks by animals or other people when collecting fuel or water; cuts and splinters with septic complications where adequate medical treatment is not available.

*Domestic service.* Risks include: exhaustion from long hours; household accidents; vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse and damage to children's self-esteem through isolation, serving others and lack of emotional support.

*Commercial sex work.* Risks include: injuries sustained through sexual acts; developing HIV/AIDS and other STDs; physical abuse or murder; stigmatisation and damage to emotional and psychological development.

*Urban informal sector work.* Risks include: abuse by clients; theft or extortion of earnings; harrassment by police and business owners; contracting diseases through litter-picking; traffic accidents; psychological damage through isolation in home-based work and strain and injuries from repetitive work.

*Military operations.* Risks include: injuries; death; sexual exploitation and abuse; psychological damage and socialisation into violence which is carried over into civilian life.

In all cases hard labour for long hours is likely to carry the risk of exhaustion and developing long-term muscular injuries. Like most poor, casual and undocumented workers, children are unlikely to be able to claim compensation for injuries or work-related illness. With long-term health hazards, obtaining compensation may be particularly difficult as former child workers are unlikely to have records of childhood employment, particularly where this was informal or illegal. 'This leaves the child, now an adult, paying the full cost of workplace disease incurred in childhood' (Loewenson, 1991:28).

**Exploitation**

Criteria for assessing exploitation relate to pay and contractual rather than physical working conditions and include: hours worked; levels of pay; who receives the pay; children's freedom to quit (whether workers are bonded or not) or to take time off; the level of responsibility demanded by the work in relation to children's developmental stage; eligibility for social security benefits; whether children have been trafficked under false pretences; whether children are allowed to join, or form trade unions; whether child workers' rights, as workers or as children in national law are being violated and the absence of physical or sexual violence or coercion.

### Opportunities foregone

These include: educational development and acquiring skills if children are unable to attend formal or non-formal education regularly; emotional development where children are separated from positive adult role models; rest and recreation where children's time is filled with working or attending school and working, or where children are always on call for an employer.

### Benefits

Some of the benefits to children of non-hazardous or non-exploitative work may be: improved health or access to education through greater household income; the development of useful skills for future employment; stimulation of intellectual development and problem-solving skills; development of social skills; the growth of self-esteem through mastering a skill and through contributing to household income or production, and through participation in the social and cultural life of a community.

# Chapter 4
# Interventions[30]

The examples discussed below illustrate experience in tackling the problems of working children. They aim to illuminate general principles, successes and pitfalls, rather than constituting a 'how to' guide.[31] The interventions are categorised according to the framework outlined in Appendix I separating interventions into those that aim to:

reduce poverty and thus the need for children to work; improve conditions for working children, by promoting working children's participation in solving their own problems, through the provision of support services and by regulating children's working conditions; eliminate child work; tackle the problems of combining school and work.

Given the complexity of child work many programmes combine a number of approaches. In addition to more specifically child work-oriented interventions, programmes addressing poverty and vulnerability through food and livelihood security projects, educational, health-oriented, social security and community development initiatives may have significant impacts on child work and can be integrated with them. The nature of rural infrastructure means that rural working children are often particularly hard to reach; within this, fostered or adopted children, who may be most open to exploitation, particularly so, since they are often widely scattered. This section focuses particularly on interventions addressing child work in the South, experience in regulating child work and integrating it with education in Europe are also discussed.

Two critical issues run throughout this section: the necessity that programmes aiming to assist working children are designed and implemented in collaboration with them and the need to develop linkages between different approaches and particularly programmatic and advocacy work. Neither are particularly well developed in most strategies on child work - CWIN's experience in linking different kinds of activities is noteworthy:

**Case Study: Linking programmatic work, research and advocacy**

Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) - has carried out research on children working in a number of sectors including domestic service, various urban industries, tea estates and the carpet industry. It also supports street-working children in Kathmandu. Through publication of its research as reports and as a newsletter, Voice of Child Workers (which also features the stories of individual children) CWIN tries to keep child work issues in the public view and lobbies for change. In particular, CWIN lobbies the Nepal government to implement and enforce child labour laws. It also advocates that the government, NGOs and the international community address the problems caused by migration to urban areas and implements long-term programmes to emancipate bonded labourers (Sattaur, 1993).

Advocacy and awareness-raising are critically important to change attitudes, practices and policies on child work. They can be linked with other strategies at a number of levels. The focus of such work varies widely from making children aware of workplace hazards and their legal rights, to encouraging policy-makers to analyse the child work implications of economic and social policies. A critical issue in such work is to target stakeholders[32] with the power to effect change. These may include: working and non-working children; their families; the general public; employers; teachers; law enforcement personnel and with national and international policy-makers and planners. It is also vital to assess the possible unintended effects of such action so as not to produce negative outcomes for working children, such as losing a sole income source where no alternatives are available. Combining advocacy with action to address poverty may help to overcome this as the following case study illustrates:

**Case Study: Awareness-raising to reduce bonded child work**

Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), a Nepalese NGO, is involved in awareness-raising work with the employers and parents of bonded children, to encourage them to allow such children to attend school. It also provides non-formal education to allow children to catch up and (re-) enter the formal education system. INSEC have successfully convinced some employers to release children altogether and others to allow them to attend school. To prevent families becoming indebted to money-lenders to whom they and their children are then bonded or re-bonded, INSEC is considering developing credit schemes without exploitative interest rates.[33]

Overall there is surprisingly little evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions related to child work. This gap is particularly noticeable for advocacy and awareness-raising strategies, though not exclusive to them. Much of the discussion in this section therefore draws on fairly uncritical self-reporting.

## Addressing Poverty

### Advocacy on macro-economic issues

Local social, political and cultural factors set the context in which poverty is articulated. It is, however, clear that the effects of macro-economic trends and policies in the context of pre-existing structural inequality have been extremely significant. The international origin of such trends and policies constitutes an important space for direct advocacy, particularly for international organisations with field-based experience of the implications of such trends. This section therefore first discusses measures that can be taken at the international level to address poverty and then examines policies and programmes at national and local levels.

The connections between structural inequality at meso and micro-level, the negative effects of macro-economic trends and policies and an increase in the demand for and supply of children's labour were discussed in Section 2. To summarise, it is evident that the fiscal problems of adjusting economies and those in recession require changes in government expenditure patterns and new economic measures. However, it is undeniable that the effect of many economic policies, especially those resulting in the rapid growth of markets in poor regulatory environments, the privatisation of land and associated disenfranchisement, has been to increase poverty, inequality and child work. Debate on these issues at national and global level is therefore critical. Most consideration of the implications for children of macro-economic change, particularly adjustment and transition, has focused on declining health, nutritional status and educational enrolment, and child work has been under-addressed. Therefore there is a need for a much broader based analysis of the social effects of economic policies, with a greater emphasis on the implications for children and child work. This needs to feed into concerted advocacy with a range of donors, governments and private enterprises to influence agendas, especially during the process of policy-setting on adjustment.

At present there is a general reluctance among donors to relate poverty and resultant child work to structural inequality and macro-economic trends. For example, the World Bank's 1995 World Development Report, Workers in an Integrating World, relates children's work to micro-level aspects of poverty without reference to the broader macro-economic context. This leads to a focus on recommending that governments attempt to mitigate poverty only through improving social safety nets and the quality of education (both important measures) rather than questioning the macro-economic policies which, in part, perpetuate poverty and necessitate children working, or addressing the social, cultural and political basis for inequality.

In relation to the globalisation of private investment major advocacy points include: pay and working conditions for adult and child workers; private sector participation in community level anti-poverty and educational initiatives and getting multi-national companies to accept responsibility for enforcing labour standards in their own overseas operations and among subcontractors. Various Northern NGOs and unions are campaigning and collaborating with private enterprises on these issues.[34] Co-operation between multi-national and domestic industries in a particular sector to enforce minimum labour standards is another important issue. In Honduras for example, national and international companies in the maquila (assembly factory) zone are pooling codes of conduct to try to develop standards for good practice acceptable to workers and to all enterprises in the zone.[35] Advocacy for this sort of action by Southern and Northern activists is critical, particularly since investment by East Asian companies in other Asian and Latin American countries is increasing in significance and Northern companies are no longer the sole source of international investment.

**Public policy measures**

A wide range of public policy measures have been implemented worldwide to combat poverty. Some of these are outlined below. The connections between such programmes and child work have not been explored and more research is needed. However, there is some evidence that they may contribute to reducing the need for children to work.

- *Social security systems.* Old age and sickness pensions, unemployment benefits or direct payments for families below a certain income threshold may reduce the need for children to work by reducing household vulnerability. Often though not in all contexts, social security systems can reduce completed family size since parents' need for children's support in old age is reduced. In turn there is some macro-level evidence that children work less in smaller families.

- *Health services.* The linkages between poor health and child work were explored in Chapter 2. Accessible and good quality preventative and curative health services, for adults as well as children, can reduce the impact of sickness on poor households, and thus the need to mobilise children's labour to pay for health care, or to generate income where adult breadwinners are incapacitated.

- *Employment guarantee and job creation schemes.* Programmes such as Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme and Botswana' Drought Relief Programme aim to increase the incomes available to poor households through the employment of women and men. No assessment could be found of the implications of improved adult incomes for child work. As with other income-boosting measures this is likely to depend on context-specific patterns of control of income and expenditure.

- *Enforcing minimum living wages for adults.* This could have very significant effects in reducing overall levels of poverty and thus the need for children to work. There is however, the risk that it would increase the incentive for employers to hire children at lower wage rates. Therefore action with small-scale and rural employers and sub-contractors, as well as with visible large-scale employers which is likely to require an expansion of labour law enforcement enforcement capacity, may be necessary (see Section 4). Concerted action among governments is also necessary to reduce the likelihood of capital flight to countries with laxer regulations.

- *Land reforms.* Poverty reduction through land redistribution may reduce the need for children to work for survival. However, the size of the redistributed land parcel may be crucial. There is some evidence from Bangladesh that while children of landless labourers work long hours for their families and for employers, children of families with

small land parcels may work longer hours on family farms and homesteads (Cain, 1977). However, land reforms are undoubtedly an important poverty-alleviation measure and the implications for household wellbeing, including that of children need to be assessed in context.

- *Natural resources policy.* Policies which prohibit access to common property resources such as fuelwood and fodder may increase the need for poor households to mobilise children's labour to generate cash to purchase these essential items. On the other hand, children may find this preferable to the often harder work involved in gathering such products. Assessment of the implications of such strategies thus needs to involve affected children in addition to analysis of the implications for the overall welfare of households.

- *Encouraging investment in rural areas.* Employment opportunities with living wages in rural areas can reduce the need for children to work. Stimulating such investment often constitutes part of state regional development policy, but may occasionally be undertaken by an NGO as detailed in the following case study.

**Case study: an NGO initiative to promote business investment in rural areas**

In Thailand, an NGO established the Thai Business in Rural Development Initiative (T-Bird), which encourages national and international companies to locate their factories in rural areas. Since factory wages are considerably higher than those from subsistence farming, this is an attractive option to rural adults. Lower wages in rural than urban areas also make it attractive to the companies. T-Bird has encouraged private sector companies to share skills for small-scale economic development. This project aimed to stop rural families sending children into prostitution (Leipziger and Gunn, 1995:37) though the extent to which it has been successful is unclear.

**Credit, micro-enterprise and integrated community development programmes**

Projects attempting to reduce the need for children to work often propose micro-enterprise and credit programmes to increase household income, aimed either at children or their families. There has been little evaluation of such programmes as tools to reduce the need for children to work (Anker and Melkas, 1995:1) and most assume a positive impact. One documented 'success story' was SCF's Kiddybank project in Bangladesh. This formed part of a wider health and community development project, and gave small cash and stock loans to nutritionally vulnerable children. The children raised the stock in their spare time and the proceeds from selling the stock enabled the children to stay in school (Rutherford, 1993). Credit schemes which set interest rates at break-even level may reduce the need for poor people to rely on exploitative sources of credit, particularly when the credit is needed to weather a crisis. The extremely high interest rates charged by money-lenders can necessitate the mobilisation of family labour to pay off debts and 'development-oriented' credit schemes may help avoid this.

There is some evidence that credit and micro-enterprise projects can increase children's workload. For example, where a household engages in an income-generating project or is repaying loans to a tight schedule children may have to work harder to maximise earnings from the enterprise (Peace and Hulme, 1993). Just as micro-enterprise projects targeting men often result in increased workloads for women, the extra work associated with an income-generating project can easily be shifted onto children who may be least able to refuse. For example, an assessment of the effects of micro-enterprise development on children in a Lima slum found a particularly strong increased demand for children's labour in micro-enterprises employing no external non-family staff (Davies, 1990). Likewise, an evaluation of SCF-US's credit and savings scheme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip found that some children had been withdrawn from school to assist their mothers with

such enterprises or that their school performance had suffered through the extra work (SCF, 1992:20). Nevertheless, children may see increases in their workloads positively if for example, they can attend school, eat better or can purchase new clothes or shoes with increased household income.

Where the returns to micro-enterprises are low, or where children command relatively high wages in local labour markets, credit schemes may be ineffective in reducing the need for children to work as the case study from Tharparkar in Pakistan illustrates.

**Case study: Community development through credit and health services**

An SCF integrated rural development project in Tharparkar, Pakistan (a desert with few employment options for adults) attempted to reduce poverty through health and veterinary services and credit and technical assistance for income-generating projects. It was also hoped that this might provide sufficient income for families to stop sending children, especially scheduled caste and tribe boys under 14, to work as carpet weavers. However, as in many other income-generating projects the income realised by participants was relatively small, and certainly not a viable alternative to carpet industry wages (SCF, 1993).

Local level improvements in natural resources quality and management may significantly reduce poverty and the need for children to work. This is illustrated in the case study from Gujarat, India which follows:

**Case study: Reduction in child work through improved natural resources management.**

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gujarat, India initiated a community development process in order to reduce poverty among tribal villagers in a semi-arid area with high migration. Generally children accompanied parents when they migrated, and assisted their parents at the farm, forest or at home while they were resident in the village. The focus of AKRSP's involvement was stimulating participatory local natural resource management to reverse patterns of land degradation. In combination with a credit and savings programme village development organisations were able to improve local natural resources to the extent that villagers were able to make a living from farming all year round. This meant that they no longer had to migrate and as livelihoods have become more secure, the number of parents who can now afford to send their children (both boys and girls) to school has increased significantly (Shah, 1996).

## Key Issues: Addressing Poverty

1. More detailed assessments of micro-macro linkages and the implications for children's work are needed, both for macro-economic processes and policies and for anti-poverty policies. Such information is essential for effective advocacy and programming.

2. When planning micro-level anti-poverty projects it is important to consider advocacy at the macro-level so that projects contribute to a wider goal of eliminating the root causes of children's work.

3. Collaboration between organisations concerned with child work issues is necessary to engage in concerted advocacy on a number of levels, including donors, private enterprises and the state.

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4. In assessing the contribution of micro-finance and community development projects as a strategy for reducing child work, it is important to analyse whether increases in children's workload, where they occur, have overall positive or negative effects on their wellbeing. Discussions with working children are necessary for such assessments.

5. Anti-poverty measures alone may not be sufficient to reduce the need for children to work as successful enterprises may draw children into work. Thijs (1995) stresses the importance of combining anti-poverty projects with measures to motivate children to attend school and parents to send them.

## Improving children's working conditions

### Working children's organisations

The main principle of working children's organisations is that working children analyse their own situations, discuss the kinds of support they need and speak out for themselves on these issues. Such organisations mainly advocate for recognition of working children's rights - for fair wages and conditions; to be able to attend school; for the participation of working children in planning programmes which aim to help them; and against poverty, to reduce the need for children to work. Well-known examples of working children's organisations include the Movement of Working Children and Adolescents of Nicaragua (NATRAS), the Movement of Working Children and Adolescents from Christian Working Class Families (MANTHOC) in Peru, the National Movement of Street Children (MNMMR) in Brazil, the organisations assisted by the Concerned for Working Children in Bangalore, India and the urban working children's associations assisted by ENDA Jeunesse Action in francophone West Africa. In general, such organisations are most strongly developed in India and Latin America, two regions with long histories of social movements. The case studies following illustrate some of the activities undertaken by working children's associations. This section also makes reference to the activities of adult labour organisations in securing benefits for adult and child workers.

**Case study: A children's union**

Butterflies, a Delhi-based NGO has helped working children in eight parts of the city to organise to protect themselves from harassment through a child worker's union - Bal Mazadoor Union. Initially, Butterflies helped the children to organise a *Bal Sabha* (children's council) where they discussed issues such as police harassment, non-payment of wages, education and saving schemes. After an incident where a number of market boys were beaten up by their employers working children decided to form a union. Their application to do so was twice rejected on the grounds that they were too young to be union members and is currently pending in the Indian Supreme Court. Their case rests on the strength of Article 14 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which recognises the rights of children 'to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly'. So far it is too early to know whether the union will be effective in securing better conditions for its members (Singh and Trivedy, 1996:8-9).

**Case study: Raising public awareness of the problems facing working children**

ENDA Jeunesse Action has organised two regional meetings of urban working children from 21 cities in 9 west African countries. The many working children's groups formed after the first meeting have raised the profile of working children's issues and increased their representation with community and police authorities. At the second meeting, these groups formed themselves into an overall association "Working Children". Their plan of action states:

'To make people respect our rights, we should organise ourselves according to the problems we face, the type of work we do and where we do it so that we can solve our problems without having to interrupt our work too much. We should continue to inform other youth groups and the general public through sporting and cultural activities. Finally, we should share the experiences of our different countries to work to increase child and youth literacy.... We also aim to set up a solidarity fund, a part of which could be used to help finance local, national and regional associations working with the media to raise the awareness of the general public and governments. We also aim to set up close links with Working Children to defend our rights at the sub-regional level' (Lettre de la rue, 1996:5).

**Case study: Working Children' Representation in Local and Regional Government**

The Concerned for Working Children (CWC), an NGO based in Bangalore, India, has tried to address child work by organising children to have a stake in the *panchayat* (local government) system and to express their needs and demands through this system. CWC has encouraged the formation of children's collectives *(bhimasanghas)*. These collectives allow children to enter a partnership with adults, particularly through links with other village-level groups, such as women's groups. Through *bhimasanghas*, children also have a say in planning and assessing the programmes run by CWC such as non-formal education centres.

Over the years, making and implementing action plans has become part of the informal activities of *bhimasanghas*, particularly through *Panchayat Toofans* which CWC has organised - task forces at village and taluka level, in which representatives of *bhimasanghas*, women's groups, *panchayats* and certain government officers participate. *Bhimasanghas* and women's groups also plan village based production, and the credit and training needed to achieve these. It is hoped that this will stem the tide of migration and thus the entry of children into the labour market. (Singh and Trivedy, 1996:7-8).

Where adults and children work together or in the same occupation, adult labour organisations may be effective in securing improved conditions for all workers including children. For example, a labour union in a *bidi* (cigarette) factory in Bangladesh succeeded in introducing a limit on the number of *bidis* workers needed to produce each day, thus reducing work pressure. This may have been particularly beneficial for child workers for whom long work days would have been relatively more exhausting.[16]

## Key Issues: Working Children's Organisations

While recognising the importance of working children organising and campaigning on their own behalf, a number of issues arise for organisations formulating strategies around working with them. These include:

1. The extent to which such organisations are genuinely participatory. Some organisations which claim to represent all working children may be dominated by boys, older children, children of dominant ethnic groups and children who work on the street. NATRAS has tried to overcome this problem by promoting girls' leadership, attempting to ensure the equal participation of younger children and encouraging rural children and child domestic workers to join the movement (Liebel, 1996).

2. Members of working children's organisations do not represent all working children. Some of the most exploited children - such as domestic workers who are not allowed to leave the house - may be very difficult to reach, let alone to organise. The perspectives of non-members of organisations may be very different to those of members and it is important to involve unorganised, as well as organised working children when planning initiatives.

3. At present little documented evidence is available of working children's organisations' effectiveness in advocacy in their own interests, or of the extent to which working children perceive membership of such an organisation as a source of 'empowerment'. This needs careful monitoring given the appeal of supporting such organisations, particularly for organisations committed to promoting children's participation in solving their own problems.

4. There may be a danger of support organisations idealising working children's organisations and their social and political role. This in turn may obscure some of the negative aspects of child work.

### Employers' Initiatives to Improve Children's Working Conditions [37]

- *Changing technology.* Machinery designed for adults may be too large and heavy for children to operate, increasing their risk of accidents and injuries. Adapting technology so that it is more suitable for children's size may reduce the risks they face. For example, the management of a Bangladeshi carpet factory observed that children were suffering sever muscular pain working on large looms and rebuilt smaller looms for children (Leipziger and Gunn, 1995:25).

- *Cutting children's working hours.* This often involves children attending school half a day and working half a day. While this can reduce the risk of children getting exhausted at work and therefore being more prone to accidents, without wage increases children may have to look for work that brings in more money even if the hours are longer.

- *Educating adults and children about safety measures* to help cut the risk of workplace accidents and ensuring that such measures are implemented.

- *Provision of social services and infrastructure for children and adults.* These can include running hostels to increase the safety of child, particularly girl employees, providing meals, health care, kindergartens and schools (Gunn and Leipziger, 1995).

**Support Services**

The great majority of projects concerned with working children fall into this category. Most support urban children working in the informal sector but initiatives with rural children and child domestics are also discussed.

- *Measures to reduce children's work burdens*
  Many labour-saving technology initiatives promoted by government departments or NGOs aiming to reduce women's work burden may have significant implications for girls and to a lesser extent, for young boys. These include: water pumps, grinding mills and fuel-efficient stoves. When planning such projects it is important not to assume that the effects will be positive for all children, as the case study from Belize illustrates.

**Case Studies: Labour-saving technologies and children's workloads**

**Water supply projects**
In addition to the health benefits of safe water supply, one of the goals of SCF water supply projects throughout Sub-Saharan Africa is to reduce girls' workload. In many rural areas, in particular, girls have to carry water long distances, and installing water pumps in villages can reduce girls' work by cutting the distance they have to carry water, the time and energy they expend doing so and the risk of injury they face from carrying heavy loads.

**Community grinding mills**
Howard (1994) found that after the introduction of a mechanised cornmill in a Belizean village, the task of carrying corn to and from the grinding mill became one of boys and girls aged 4-9. Thus, while older girls' and women's workload decreased, that of younger children increased, though it is unclear whether smaller children's risk of injury increased as a result.

- *Services for child domestic workers*
  Until recently child domestic workers have received little policy or programmatic attention. This has started to change over the past two years with the publication of a number of studies on the issue sponsored by Anti-Slavery International, ILO, UNICEF and other organisations. However, there is still a lack of experience of interventions with child domestic workers, in part because they are so hard to reach. Existing work concentrates on social and educational support for child domestics workers, as illustrated in the following case study and occasionally educational work with employers. Some NGOs, such as Shoishob in Bangladesh are attempting to organise adult domestic workers to fight the exploitation and abuse of child domestic workers as well as that of adults.[38] The exploitation of migrant or trafficked child domestic workers may deserve further attention; no information was available on this. However, organisations working with adult migrant domestic workers may be assisting child domestic workers on a case by case basis. Given the scale of sexual [39]and physical abuse[40] of child domestics by employers, culturally-sensitive support and counselling services as well as action to stop this abuse, are likely to be necessary.

**Case Study: Support services for child domestics in Haiti**

Foyer Maurice Sixto (FMS) a Haitian NGO is one of the few organisations working directly with child domestic workers. In Haiti such children, many of whom work in conditions of near slavery, are known as restaveks. FMS runs a centre for restaveks with classes in basic numeracy and literacy, vocational training and works with restaveks to help them develop their self-esteem and confidence, which has often suffered through starting live-in domestic work very young (FMS, 1996). FMS is also trying to promote improvements in the treatment of restaveks by their employers.

- *Projects with children working in the urban informal sector*
  Projects with urban working children include: feeding schemes, night shelters, drop-in centres, literacy programmes, scholarships, life skills education, safer work opportunities, opportunities to develop creativity, family tracing schemes, advocacy and often combinations of several of these. Many projects have ignored urban working children's families, but those that see familial abuse and neglect as the reason why children work increasingly try to include families, in practice mothers, in their programmes. Several Honduran NGOs combine economic support to children or their families (e.g. through scholarship programmes or credit schemes) with educational work with parents on children's rights. There is a tendency, perhaps stronger with children working on the streets than other working children to propose interventions which react to the public image of poor children on the street as a problem. Such interventions may not necessarily be based on an analysis of such children's lives. The popularity of feeding schemes for example illustrates this - there is some evidence that children working on the street are often less nutritionally vulnerable than those working elsewhere. This relates also to a tendency to concentrate service provision on the most visible working children, for example those working on the streets.

**Case Studies: Support to Children Working in the Urban Informal Sector**

**Combining support services with advocacy**
In El Salvador, SCF (UK) is supporting the Olof Palme Foundation for the Protection of Children (FUNPRONOP) which assists 600 children who work in the markets of San Salvador and 200 children who work on the streets. FUNPRONOP is committed to involving the families of working children in its programmes so as not to alienate them.[41] FUNPRONOP provides services such as lodging, food and family reunification for children estranged from their families and non-formal education, to allow working children who do not attend school to reintegrate into the formal system and to reduce absenteeism and drop-out. It also plans to arrange credit and training and assist working children with productive projects and to conduct life skills education on topics such as gender awareness and children's rights.

FUNPRONOP makes an active link between its practical experience with working children and advocacy on issues affecting them. For example, it has prominently denounced the murder of street-living and working children which continues in El Salvador. It has also contributed to debates on poverty in El Salvador with a discussion of the setting of poverty lines and the contents of basic foodbaskets (FUNPRONOP, 1994; 1995).

Developing working children's creativity SCF has also supported mural painting workshops for urban working children in Esteli, Nicaragua. These workshops allow children to develop their creativity and artistic skills, to express their views of their work and of their position in society through art and to develop stronger links among themselves. The NGO which organised these workshops intends to expand its programme to encompass rural working children too.

## Key Issues: Support services

1. Many support services for working children are doing valuable work improving the quality of their lives. However, for this to be the whole focus of a strategy can depoliticise the wider issues facing working children. Such programmes therefore need to be combined with advocacy addressing the roots of working children's disadvantage and exploitation.

2. 'One-off' or irregular workshops may need follow-up measures to ensure that they represent more than an interesting experience for working children.

3. Programmes providing labour-saving technologies need to ensure that reductions in the labour of some groups of adults and children do not result in unacceptable demands on less powerful groups, such as younger children.

4. As with other programming it is critical that support services are based on an analysis of the problems facing working children. With support services for urban working children the temptation to 'do something' visible, which may not necessarily address the major problems they face, may be more acute than in other sectors.

## Regulation

Legislation is the major tool used by states to regulate child work. Passing national and ratifying and acceding to international legislation is an important symbol of a state's commitment to addressing problems relating to child work. The two most useful international instruments on the issue are ILO Convention 138 Concerning Minimum Ages for Admission to Employment and Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of

the Child (CRC).[42] These and other international legal instruments relating to child work are detailed in Appendix II.[43]

Legislation may aim either to regulate or to eliminate children's work. Regulatory rather than prohibitive legislation aims to protect children from exposure to dangerous substances, from working more than a certain number of hours per day and occasionally to stipulate minimum wages. Prohibitive legislation aims to completely prevent children working in specified sectors and below certain ages. Issues relating to both types of law are discussed below. Despite the existence of considerable legislation in both North and South, there are a number of constraints to its effectiveness as a regulatory or eliminatory tool. These include: the scope of the law, two sets of goals concerning children's work, weak enforcement capacity, difficulties in identifying children working illegally, lack of political will, social acceptance of child work, and lack of knowledge.

- *Scope of law.* Most legislation covers the formal sector only and a number of key areas of children's work such as informal sector activity, home-based work and unpaid work are usually excluded. Domestic service is often covered in labour legislation, but provisions are rarely implemented. Children's labour in family or small-scale enterprises where children are typically concentrated may be exempt from legislative control, as in India.

- *Dual goals - prohibitive and protective legislation.* Protective legislation typically covers children from the age of 14 who are allowed to work full-time in much of the world. Children under 12, for whom globally even part-time work is prohibited, may therefore be unprotected. For example, in many countries an 11-year old may be unable to claim compensation for a factory accident since his/her employment is illegal. Likewise, trafficked or illegal immigrant children may be unable to complain about workplace abuses without becoming liable for deportation.

- *Weak state enforcement capacity.* This may relate to a lack of funds for enforcement activities, particularly where the state is under pressure to reduce recurrent expenditure such as staff salaries. The result is impossibly large areas for labour inspectorates to cover both geographically and in terms of the specialist knowledge of chemicals etc. necessary (Burra, 1995:247). A further effect of this is that labour inspectors may need to supplement their salaries and may be susceptible to bribes to turn a blind eye towards breaches of the law.

- *Difficulties in identifying children working illegally.* These relate to lack of birth certificates, the ease by which documentation can be falsified and the perceived irrelevance of chronological age as a criterion for determining the acceptability of child work in a number of cultures (Blanchet, 1996).

- *Limited political will and/ or strong social acceptance* of children working. States may have passed regulatory legislation to appease internal constituencies concerned with children's rights and welfare, and for reasons of international image, as well as more genuine concerns over children's issues. At the same time, failing to enforce such legislation may placate internal interests opposed to labour regulation. A related issue is judiciaries' frequent reluctance to convict powerful members of society for the exploitation of children, particularly poor or minority children, or girls, or to impose meaningful penalties for violations of labour law. Community monitoring of children's work, sometimes proposed as a solution to weak state regulatory capacity, relies on strong social disapproval of children working, high social acceptance of education and willingness to report other community members. In some contexts none of these may be tenable assumptions.

- *Lack of knowledge* of legal rights and procedures for complaints. Working children may also lack the self-confidence to prosecute employers. Employers may also be unaware of their legal obligations. Legal awareness initiatives with working children such as that carried out by the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights in Thailand and Ain-o-Shalish Kendra in Bangladesh, can contribute to helping working children make use of legal protection accorded to them.

Despite these problems legislation can provide a powerful tool for advocacy. Passing and implementing laws which protect children from dangerous and exploitative forms of work is an important, though not sufficient step towards eliminating the negative aspects of child work. Where children work more for self-esteem, to have some money and to enhance their future job prospects rather than out of poverty, regulation may be a particularly important strategy. In this context, ensuring that employers comply with health and safety laws and enforcing minimum wage law may be the best way to address potential hazards and exploitation. However, adequate financing of regulatory activities is critical. 90 per cent of working children in a study conducted in Scotland and northern England had never had a work permit (as officially they should). This may relate among other factors to progressive restriction of local authority budgets (Lavalette et. al, 1995).

Caution is necessary to ensure that law enforcement does not push children into more dangerous hidden forms of work, or remove an important household income source without putting alternatives into place as the following case study illustrates. For example, enforcing minimum wage laws for adults, rather than banning children's employment may have more positive effects on working children, though it could also act to increase the demand for children's cheaper labour.

**Case study: Unintended effects of planned law enforcement**

In Bangladesh in 1993, threats to enforce child labour laws resulted in the expulsion of children believed to be under 12 working in bidi (cigarette) factories. However, a few months later, many of the dismissed children started to come back to work. Factory management was now more cautious and registered them as 'helpers' rather than employees, which meant that they earned less than before despite the fact that they were doing the same jobs and working the same hours. In other cases some children had to bribe guards to allow them into factories (Blanchet, 1996: 80-82).

**Key Issues: Regulation**

1. Laws which criminalise "acceptable" aspects of children's work (such as much street-vending) may not be in children's best interests, while those that protect children from hazard or exploitation may have more positive effects. An advocacy strategy calling for law enforcement needs to include analysis of the key constraints to law enforcement at present and consideration of the possible unintended consequences for working children. This must include working children's participation.

2. The effectiveness of legal-based approaches may vary considerably depending on the transparency of judicial systems, state enforcement capacity and the existence of alternatives for working children. Legal-based approaches may therefore be more appropriate in some contexts than others.

3. Enforcement of law on child work may necessitate support to governments to enhance their labour inspection capacity.

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4. Work to improve law enforcement may need to include sensitisation of enforcement personnel such as labour inspectors and police to the reasons why children work, to help move away from approaches which punish working children and to focus instead on employers' culpability.

5. Raising policy-makers and the judiciary's awareness of negative aspects of child work may be an important strategy in working towards prosecution of employers who exploit children. However, the strength of vested interests in the status quo means that effecting change can be difficult and may endanger campaigners.

## Elimination

Eliminatory measures aim to stop children working rather than eliminate the reasons why they work. In addition to prohibitive legislation measures include trade sanctions, rescues and motivational camps.

### Trade-related measures

Most trade-related measures aim to ensure that products have not been made with children's labour. Trade-related measures are based on moral opposition to children working or to their working conditions and the perceived effect of children's employment on adult labour conditions. In that the garment sector has been such a target, northern protectionist agendas are strongly suspected (Poudyal, 1994). Trade-related measures inevitably concentrate on export production which usually takes place in formal sector enterprises covered by labour law and many such measures campaign for implementation of this legislation.[44] A few initiatives aim to ensure that children attend school, and to reduce the risks they face without removing their means of survival. There is increasing recognition that trade-related measures particularly bans and boycotts can result in children losing their jobs and without alternative sources of economic support, engaging in moredangerous occupations. Working children have rarely, if ever, been consulted on their views of trade-related measures.

- *Bans and Boycotts*
  These consist of consumer action or trade sanctions against products made with children's labour. However, by concentrating on exported products they often target sectors where working conditions are better than in much production for domestic markets and non- industrial employment. This may result in children taking up more dangerous and unregulated forms of work as illustrated in the next case study.

- *Social clauses*[45]
  Social clauses in trading agreements are a means of pressurising states to enforce labour legislation and usually aim to eliminate child work. Proponents generally call for removal of children from employment and for commitments by the state to provide universal primary education and by employers to pay a living wage to adults.

  The main supporters of social clauses are northern trade unions including the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and some social and labour activists who perceive such clauses as a valuable threat to encourage employers to improve labour standards. Some Southern trade unions view social clauses as a way to enforce labour standards (for example South African unions)[46] while others oppose them on grounds of national economic sovereignty and suspicion of northern proponents' vested interests (for example Indian unions). Most Northern and Southern governments oppose social clauses; Northern governments through belief in the need to keep trade and social issues separate, while southern governments fear northern protectionist interests. Since violations of labour standards and particularly

exploitation of child workers are often greater in production for domestic markets, some activists propose that social clauses should also apply to domestic production (Hensman, 1996). No social clauses with provisions on children's labour have been implemented to date. Effects are likely to be similar to those of bans and boycotts.

**Case study: Unintended effects of a threatened boycott in Bangladesh**

The reaction to the US Child Labour Deterrence Bill (1993), known as the Harkin Bill, illustrates the negative effects of a threatened trade ban. This Bill which has not yet been passed attempts to prevent the import into the US of products made by children under 14. Bangladesh, where children are employed in garment factories on a large scale and whose aid dependency weakens its negotiating power was among targeted countries.

Concern about the possible loss of export markets led factory owners to dismiss children under 14, none of whom are reported to have entered schools but to have sought other often more dangerous work,[47] as Saleha's story illustrates:

'Saleha is 12 years old and [now] works 8 hours a day breaking bricks in the broiling sun. For her work she is paid Taka 16-18 ($0.45) per day. Previously she had been employed in a garment factory where she earned Taka 38 ($1.00) a day folding and packing clothes. Saleha's mother also breaks bricks and her father works as a day mason. Neither earn enough to support Saleha and her two siblings' (Sobhan and Hossain, 1995:2).

Garment factories are mostly relatively clean and hygienic. Children do light finishing work which involves no machinery and in some factories children were better nourished than those working elsewhere or at home (Boyden, 1994). For the child workers, overwhelmingly girls, garment industry employment was one of the few socially acceptable employment options, which brought them money and status, which they have now lost. Their retrenchment may also

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.....

have threatened their mothers' employment because of the perceived risks of leaving young girls home alone (Sobhan and Hossain, 1995:5). In response to dismissal, retrenched child workers who had never been consulted on their views published the following appeal in the national press:

'Our fellow young workers who were terminated form the garments industry in the previous months have either become child prostitutes or brick breakers or garbage collectors and so on.... Now it is our humanitarian appeal to all of you to allow us to continue our light work for 5-6 hours a day and give us an opportunity to attend school for 2-3 hours a day. If you find child workers in any hazardous/heavy work you may bring them back to light work and you may even stop new recruitment of young workers in the garment industry, but don't throw away on the street those of us who are already involved in some kind of light work....' (cited in Boyden, 1994:38).

To attempt to mitigate these negative effects a programme to provide schooling for retrenched workers aged under 14 has been devised by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), the ILO, UNICEF and the Government of Bangladesh. While this is a sincere attempt to address some of the problems facing working children there are concerns that the programme will benefit very few children and will be extremely expensive to run. Further, it is becoming clear that most of the children who were working in the garments factories will still be displaced into other, more dangerous or poorly remunerated occupations, and that many will not be able to take advantage of the schooling to be provided. Monitoring the impact of this initiative on retrenched children, and incorporating this information into ongoing and new activities will be important.

- *Codes of conduct and voluntary agreements*
These are commitments made by private sector bodies often in the face of activist pressure to meet certain labour standards in their own operations and in sub-contracting. These normally aim to eliminate the employment of children under 14 (or the minimum age for leaving school or starting work if this is greater) and to improve the conditions of children over 14 and adult workers. Difficulties with codes of conduct include:

  - The voluntary nature of such agreements which means that they are not legally binding and therefore lack enforceability. Thus there is the risk that in practice they improve a company's public image but with little effect on working children's welfare.

  - The fact that workers may be unaware of such agreements and therefore unable to organise to demand compliance. To be effective codes of conduct need to be posted in workplaces, so that workers are aware of their existence.[48] Additionally, codes of conduct are signed by top management and like the workers, middle and line managers are often unaware of their existence and thus unable to implement them.

**Case Study: Voluntary private sector initiative with working children**

Levi-Strauss's Global Sourcing Guidelines state that children under 14 should not be employed directly or in subcontractors producing for Levi-Strauss. In order to prevent the displacement of children employed by subcontractors into more dangerous and less well paid work, in Bangladesh Levi-Strauss is paying for the schooling of children under 14 who were employed in factories they source from. The subcontractors guarantee employment for these children in the longer-term (Leipziger, 1994; Boyden, 1994). The Council on Economic Priorities in the USA has taken a lead in fostering initiatives of this kind and has recently started to promote similar activities with European-based companies.

- *Certification schemes*
Certification schemes aim to label products made without children's labour. The best known example of such a scheme is the Rugmark discussed in the following case study.[49] There appears to be most interest in measures of this kind in South Asia which may relate to the greater incidence of children's employment in export manufacturing than in other regions. The Government of India has launched its own label - the Kaleen mark; the Nepalese government is developing its own Rugmark and discussions for a similar label are under way in Pakistan. Cynics charge that this benefits consumers' consciences rather than working children while protagonists hope that consumer pressure will drive manufacturers using children's labour out of the market.

**Case Study: Certifying products free from children's labour**

The Rugmark Foundation checks a manufacturer's looms to ensure that children are not being employed in violation of Indian labour law. Young workers must be over 14 and inspectors must see their birth certificates. Owners' children are allowed to work at a younger age so long as there is documentary evidence that they also attend school. Empty places at the loom are also checked against a register of employees and repeat visits are made to ascertain that they are not filled by illegal child workers. The Rugmark Foundation inspectors also carry out later spot checks and grant labels for a certain number of carpets for a particular export order. The Foundation also keeps lists of applicants who have been refused in order that consumers can check that their carpet has not been made by children. Exporters pay a fee for the label and registration and importers pays a 2 per cent levy to be used for rehabilitatory schools for released children. These are monitored by UNICEF-India.

There are a number of difficulties with Rugmark as it operates at present:

- The small number of inspectors makes it impossible for many manufacturers who do not employ children to get certification. For example, the market for carpets made by adult Tibetan refugees in India is under pressure;[50]
- Monitoring: employers may resort to a number of subterfuges to hide the fact that children are employed;
- Children in the most abusive conditions are not reached, as this initiative is attracting relatively better employers who have to make minimal adjustments to comply with Rugmark conditions;
- At present coverage is limited - only 30 per cent of the German market for hand-knotted carpets is certified as free from children's labour;
- Very little is known about the effects of retrenchment on former child carpet workers.

### Rescues

Rescues consist of high-profile releases of bonded children who are not free to leave until their debts have been worked off and are often forcibly kept on the employer's premises, usually factories or brothels. These are mostly NGO initiatives though some are organised in conjunction with labour inspectorates. However, with low and declining public sector salaries there is the risk that officials may tip off employers in return for a fee, making concerted action on the issue extremely difficult. The media attention obtainable for such ventures may provide an impetus for campaigning and advocacy on working children's issues. For example, after releasing bonded children from a neon tube assembly plant, the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights in Thailand won a test case which resulted in compensation to the children for underpayment (CWA, 1985). Other organisations releasing bonded children include the Bonded Labour Liberation Front in India and Pakistan and the Kamalayan Development Center in the Philippines.

**Case study: Kamalayan Development Foundation, the Philippines**

KDF conducts rescues in the following manner. Youth volunteers identify factories recruiting child workers and live in communities surrounding the factories for several months. They collect information and may infiltrate factories to verify the conditions of child workers. Once sufficient information has been gathered, KDF collaborates with like-minded groups to conduct raids and release bonded child and adult workers. KDF runssafe houses for released children to ease their transition to other safer jobs with more humane conditions or to school (SCF, 1994). Though a pilot project KDF is attempting to raise awareness of the working conditions of trafficked children in their areas of origin.[51]

**Motivational camps**

In motivational camps participant children leave work and attend non-formal education classes and recreational activities on a residential basis for a number of months. Such camps aim to motivate children to attend school and to assist them to catch up on missed learning through non-formal programmes until they are ready to join or re-join the formal sector. The greatest concentration of experience on this issue is in India, though similar activities have been carried out by the Bonded Labour Liberation Front in Pakistan. In some cases organisers do not require children to leave work altogether but aim mainly to motivate them to attend school. Occasionally, awareness raising and motivation work may be combined with incentive payments.

## Key Issues: Elimination

1. Assessment of the degree of hazard and exploitation children face and analysis of possible effects and discussion of alternatives with working children are essential before launching eliminatory measures. Constructive attempts to improve working conditions and enable children to attend school are likely to be more helpful than actual or threatened boycotts.

2. With trade-related measures concerted action among governments is necessary to prevent companies from relocating in response to tighter employment laws to countries where conditions on children's employment are laxer.

3. Independent monitoring of trade-related measures such as certification schemes and codes of conduct, is essential to ensure that they produce benefits in children's wellbeing, rather than merely easing consumers' consciences.

4. Where children are removed or retrenched from work well-coordinated follow-up activities are essential to maintain their interest and safeguard their wellbeing.

5. Assisting children or their families to find safer alternative bases of livelihoods may be necessary. Motivational work alone may not be sufficient.

6. Where projects provide safe houses it is important that released child workers are not institutionalised in ways which may be reminiscent of their former workplaces.

## Tackling the problem of school and work

Interventions aiming to increase working children's educational participation address the issue in three main ways: by attempting to get children out of work and into school without addressing core reasons why children do not attend; by making it easier for children to combine work and school and by measures to reduce the costs to families of children's school attendance.

### Compulsory primary education

The key proponent of compulsory primary education as a way to eliminate child work is Weiner (1991), who argues that state intervention is crucial since the market alone is unlikely to reduce either the supply of children or demand for their work. This argument is based on nineteenth century European experience and that of South Korea and Taiwan where education was made compulsory despite demand for children's work. A further argument is that a compulsory primary education policy imposes obligations on the state to make educational provision for all children and is a tangible commitment towards the elimination of the most hazardous and exploitative forms of children's work (Harriss, 1996). Compulsory primary education may be the best defence against the most exploitative forms of children's work, since school-going children cannot work sixteen hour days or be detained in factories or brothels and not allowed out (Boyden, 1994).

The arguments against seeing compulsory education as a solution to child work are: that making primary education compulsory is ineffective as a sole strategy to tackle the negative aspects of children's work. Without improvements in the quality and accessibility of education, the forces keeping poor children out of school are likely to remain more significant than fear of the law, particularly where state enforcement capacity is limited. However, improvements to the quality and relevance of education, and reductions in the costs of sending children to school may have significant impact reducing the incidence of children working in addition to beneficial educational effects.

The examples of Kerala (India) and Sri Lanka are frequently cited as evidence that education can be made compulsory in poor countries. However, despite a clear commitment by the state, other factors may have been equally important. Other critical factors included: powerful rural labour unions which mobilised against the employment of children and higher rates of adult women's labour force participation than elsewhere in South Asia which reduced formal sector employment opportunities for children.[52]

### Scheduling of formal education

In some countries where children's work in agriculture is an important component of the rural economy schooling is scheduled so as not to clash with the peak agricultural season. This aims to enable children to attend school consistently without interruptions for long periods when their labour is needed at home or in the fields. Examples include Kerala (India) and Vietnam. Double-shift arrangements where children attend school in either the morning or the afternoon, while conceived as ways to maximise government resources, may also enable children to combine school and work. For example, before international sanctions destroyed the market for Iraqi products many children (mostly girls) in Northern Iraq attended school for half a day and worked in carpet factories for the other half day.[53]

Scheduling schooling around peak agricultural seasons can, however, make school years very short with, for example, closure for up to 200 days per year in Kerala (Nieuwenhuys, 1994). Where school timings are scheduled so that children can complete domestic chores before and after school this may mean that children are in school in the hottest part of the day and find it hard to concentrate. Consulting working children on proposed changes to school scheduling, though no panacea, would help resolve these dilemmas.

### Non-formal education

Many NGOs and some governments run non-formal education classes which enable children to work and obtain an education. Such classes often take place at night, when children are free to attend. Such initiatives are often innovative and may provide better quality and more relevant education than that available in the formal system. In urban areas in particular there may be a risk of programmes being captured by non-working lower middle class children, for whom alternative education is a desirable commodity.[54] Most initiatives of this kind have focused on urban children. A participatory non-formal education project with rural children in Rajasthan, India is described in the next case study.

**Case Study: Children's participation in running night schools**

In Rajasthan, the Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC), an NGO, runs night classes for children, aged 6-14 who herd animals and do domestic chores during the day. The schools teach literacy, numeracy, animal husbandry and farming and provide vocational training in other areas. The education on offer is therefore relevant to children's lives and futures.

The number of girls has risen significantly since the schools were opened in 1975 and presently 202 girls and 242 boys attend one of sixty schools in the district of which SCF supports fifteen. The Indian Department of Education has given the schools a stamp of approval and the government of Rajasthan is now running similar schools in other parts of the state (SCF, 1995b).

The children themselves participate in the running of the schools through a children's parliament also organised by the SWRC. This can involve getting rid of teachers who do not do their jobs properly as well as monitoring children's attendance and trying to initiate repairs and infrastructural improvements in their villages (Hughes, 1996). The present and previous prime ministers of this parliament are both girls; so are several of the ministers. Several former night school girls have gone on to vocational training run by SWRC in non-traditional areas such as electrical motor repair (Hughes, 1996).

### Integrating work into the formal education system

In order to allow children to gain experience of work some education systems set aside specific periods of the school year and arrange work-shadowing or work experience placements for children. In other contexts these are managed by local government authorities. Often the pay is low; these are seen as opportunities for learning about the world of work, rather than as primarily about earning income. As such they may have little relevance to children for whom remuneration is

essential. However, for children whose primary motivations are to increase their experience and expand their job prospects by working in a well-regulated environment, they may be useful schemes. An example of a work experience scheme for 13-15 year olds in Iceland follows.

**Case study: Combining work and education in Iceland**

Traditionally, in Iceland urban children were sent to the countryside to work on farms in the summer. Over the last 20-30 years a different system has emerged in towns whereby the public authorities offer all children aged 13-15 paid work for 6-12 weeks in the summer. The working day varies from 3-8 hours and most children take up this work option which is seen as part of growing up. The majority of children also assist in home-based chores and some engage in paid work throughout the year (Council of Europe, 1995).

**Measures to reduce the costs to families of educating children**

A common approach to increasing school enrolment and thus reducing child work is to reduce the costs borne by families. Most such programmes have been NGO and donor-run and often somewhat piecemeal; a few have been wider-reaching government-run schemes.

Initiatives include scholarships or provision of educational goods such as pens, text books, exercise books and uniforms to individual children, sometimes particularly aimed at girls; school feeding schemes; and the provision of kindergartens so girls do not have to care for younger siblings, illustrated in the following case study.

**Case Study: Kindergartens to allow girls to attend school**

Some rural schools in China, particularly in mountainous areas, have set up kindergartens so that school-age girls do not have to stay at home to look after younger siblings. In Gansu province in 1986, worksite childcare centres for working mothers were also provided. In combination with flexible school scheduling, financial assistance and motivational campaigns, such kindergartens have contributed significantly to raising girls' school attendance. An indication of this is a three per cent increase in girls' primary school enrolment and a two per cent increase in their secondary school enrolment between 1986-9 (Herz et al, 1991:43,50). Such kindergartens may have additional benefits for early childhood development.

There are a number of problems with interventions providing incentives to individual children. These relate to high costs and sustainability; difficulties in targeting the most vulnerable children; adequacy of compensation to parents for lost income and the opportunity costs of children's time; the fact that such initiatives address symptoms rather than causes (see following case study); and that in some cases children may start work in order to then avail themselves of incentives.

**Case study: Child Sponsorship**

SCF's Tharparkar Rural Development Project in Pakistan included a child sponsorship component which aimed to reduce the entry of boys into the carpet industry. For the children concerned it was successful - all the boys they supported stayed in school, demonstrating that relatively small amounts of cash at the right time determined whether children would study or work. However, the project questioned the effectiveness of such support as an overall strategy given that 'the growing carpet industry was unlikely ever to be short of juvenile workers' (SCF, 1993:158) and concluded that macro-level measures, such as lobbying were necessary.

## Key Issues: Education

1. Making primary education compulsory is unlikely to reduce the incidence of children working without addressing the direct and hidden costs of attending school, though if enforced it can help prevent the worst abuses.

2. Children may be involved in hazardous labour during school holidays or before and after school. In such cases, other strategies such as anti-poverty measures and awareness raising initiatives are also needed.

3. The success of experimental initiatives to improve the quality and relevance of education in attracting working children to school should be monitored and key lessons for replication disseminated.

4. Where children attend non-formal classes rather than the regular school system, costs may be high. A parallel system may however be appropriate if the regular system is unsuited to their needs for reasons of curriculum, timing, age restrictions, teaching style etc.

5. Incentive schemes usually address symptoms rather than root causes. The direct and opportunity costs of schooling may still be too high for children to attend, even with incentives.

6. Schemes providing cash, meals and material goods are susceptible to capture by less vulnerable children. This may be particularly problematic though not exclusive to programmes where commodities can be sold or passed to other children. There is also a risk that children may take up work in order to qualify for incentive payments to stop or may come to school for food and then leave again (Nieuwenhuys, 1994; Anker and Melkas, 1995).

# Chapter 5
# Recommendations

1. **Measuring impact.** To contribute to more focused and effective programming it is essential that the impact of interventions relating to child work is evaluated and documented. This applies to all the following types of interventions: advocacy and awareness-raising; support to working children's organisations as a strategy to 'empower' working children; legal-based approaches; private sector and trade-related interventions including follow-up of retrenched child workers and poverty-alleviation measures and initiatives to improve the quality of education. Such evaluations need to involve participatory discussions with working children.

2. **Working children's participation**. All action on child work issues should take into account the perspectives of working children and their families and should be based on the principle of the 'best interests of the child' and on a sound understanding of the complexities of working children's situations. This should help avoid unintended negative effects of interventions. Institutionalising working children's participation requires: the development and use of specific child-focused participatory methodologies; documentation of the strengths and pitfalls of such approaches; critical analysis of the extent to which such work is genuinely participatory and representative of different groups of working children and ensuring that less visible working children are not marginalised in such activity.

3. **Incorporating micro-macro linkages in programming**. Programming on child work needs to make explicit links between micro-level action to improve working children's conditions and attack local level causes and macro-level action and advocacy to address root causes. Analysis and documentation of the micro-level impacts of macro-level policies and programmes is essential.

4. **Combining approaches.** To maximise impact and to try to avoid negative unintended effects programming on child work should try to take action through more than one type of intervention and to make explicit linkages between them. These may include anti-poverty measures, public awareness-raising, education, regulation and advocacy.

5. **Risks and hazards.** More precise criteria need to be developed especially in the local context, to assess the risks for children pertaining to different kinds of work. Such criteria need to include both medical and psychological evidence and working children's perceptions. This would enable identification of and targeting action towards the most dangerous and abusive forms of child work. Such assessments should where possible set threshold levels over which risks become more acute or benefits negated in order to identify particularly risky practices. Analysis of the social organisation of particular forms of work is necessary to enable identification of patterns of risk among different groups of children. It is critical that unwaged and non-industrial work is included in this analysis. An initial review of medical and psychological literature on workplace hazards and co-ordination with other interested bodies (e.g. ILO, WHO) should be undertaken to avoid duplicating work.

6. **Defining exploitation.** This should be carried out locally and should encompass questions of pay, conditions, hours worked, freedom to quit, level of responsibility children are expected to take on in relation to their developmental stage and violation of child workers' rights in national law. Such criteria would make it easier to identify the most exploitative forms of work in order to direct attention towards eliminating them.

7. **Review of institutional issues, to identify ways to improve co-ordination between different actors in relation to child work.** This would illuminate among other issues the organisation of state structures for effective approaches to child work and ingredients of effective NGO and CBO partnerships for addressing the negative aspects of child work. Improved co-ordination between different government ministries, and between government,

NGOs and community-based organisations is essential for developing and implementing more effective strategies for action.

8. **Social impact assessment.** Social impact assessments should involve analysis of the implications for child work as a key element of the impact on different groups of children. This applies both to private sector investment and to state, NGO and donor-led development projects. Such analysis needs to feed into project appraisal and design, project/investment approval processes and into on-going monitoring and evaluation. In certain circumstances tools for this need to be developed, but in other cases existing impact assessment tools will suffice. Key criteria would involve shifts in the kinds of work children do, increases and decreases in workloads, changes in opportunities for adults and children and whether the work facilitates an improved quality of life by enabling school attendance or better nutrition. Working children's perceptions of changes in their workloads need to form an important part of this analysis.

*For private sector investment* such analysis is particularly important in areas with a high incidence of children working. Consideration should be given to collaboration with government or NGOs in community development and educational programmes as well as to hiring practices, to reduce the incentives for children to work. Such assessments should be part of the work both of parent companies and of subcontractors.

*In the 'development sector'* both child work-oriented projects and broader programming should consider the implications for children's workloads of particular projects as part of assessments of the impact on children. Connections may not always seem obvious but where analysis reveals that increased demands on children's labour or children taking up more dangerous/exploitative occupations are likely, mitigatory measures should be considered. Careful assessment and balancing of potential gains and losses from the changing work patterns of adults and children is necessary.

9. **Awareness-raising.** Greater public awareness-raising in the North and South of the complexity of child work issues and targeted awareness-raising on specific issues are necessary. Key stakeholders to target include: working children (on issues such as avoidance of hazards, their rights as workers, the availability of support services); parents (on children's rights issues such as education and freedom from exploitation); employers (on the complexity of the issue, ways to improve children's working conditions and to combine work and school), teachers (on the reasons why children work, and how school and work can be combined), law enforcement personnel (to prosecute exploitative employers rather than working children or their parents); policy-makers (on the complexity of the issue and fruitful public policy measures to eliminate the reasons why children engage in hazardous and exploitative work) and the public (to raise general levels of social concern).

10. **Research.** Child work is a complex subject about which numerous claims are made. For a better understanding of the complexity of various issues relating to child work to generate more effective policy and programming and more focused advocacy, research is needed into a number of areas. However, given the proliferation of studies on child work issues, it is critical that such research is tightly focused and does not represent an unjustifiable intrusion into children's lives. Key issues include:

- Establishing the implications of macro-economic trends and policies, including the internationalisation of private sector employment and adjustment and transition
- Assessing the implications of macro-level social policies such as social security systems and large-scale anti-poverty programmes for child work. This could involve comparative studies of child work in countries with similar levels of economic development but different levels of social welfare provision. Within this

assessment, analysis of differential access to such provision (by gender, ethnicity etc) and its implications for child work is crucial.

- Establishing the connections between child work, poverty, inequality and social exclusion in the North.

- Analysing the implications of specific sets of shocks and stresses such as HIV/AIDS in the family or war for child work.

- Assessing the argument that improvements in adult labour conditions will reduce the need for children to work by examining the linkages between adult and children's employment in particular sectors.

- Understanding the place of work within children's lives in a variety of cultures, social groups and types of economy. In this context analysis of rural children's paid work and rural and urban children's unpaid household work is particularly lacking. Least published material is available relating to child work in Sub-Saharan and North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

Institutional issues, as discussed in 7 above.

# Appendix 1
# Matrix for considering action

| Type of work | Type of project | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Poverty reduction | Enhancing working children's self-advocacy capacity | Support services | Regulation | Elimination | Education | Other |
| Family farming | | | | | | | |
| Family domestic work | | | | | | | |
| Agricultural labour | | | | | | | |
| Domestic work | | | | | | | |
| Factory | | | | | | | |
| Mining | | | | | | | |
| Vending | | | | | | | |
| Other informal sector | | | | | | | |
| Sex work | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | |

# Appendix 2
# Checklist for interventions relating to child work

**1. Criteria for assessing whether a proposed sector of child work is an appropriate arena for action:**

**i. Exploitation**

Degree of exploitation of children in terms of:

- hours worked
- conditions
- level of pay
- children's access to their wages
- vulnerability to violence and intimidation
- level of responsibility in relation to children's development stage
- freedom of movement
- freedom of association
- conditions

(see Appendix IV for more detailed discussion)

**ii. Hazards**

- Heaviness of work in relation to children's age and size.
- Known hazards associated with the work (see Appendix IV).
- Existence of hazards that are not integral to the work, but common e.g. sexual abuse

**iii. Opportunities foregone and benefits of work**

- What are children missing out on by working?
- What are they gaining from this kind of work?

**iv. Context**

- Why are they doing this particular kind of work?
- What alternatives are available? Could they be more dangerous/exploitative?
- Are certain groups of children more at risk/ more exploited than others (e.g. minority or trafficked children, boys/girls)? Do they need different approaches

**v. Stakeholders' perceptions of work and alternatives**

What are the views of:

- working children
- their families
- employers (if applicable)
- government (Ministries of Labour, Education, Youth, Social Welfare etc.)
- NGOs
- others

**vi. Institutional issues**

- Existence of other organisations working on similar issues and possibilities for linkages/ collaboration
- Capacities of partner organisations
- Cost-effectiveness of intervention
- Sustainability

**2. What is the aim of the project/programme?**

- Stimulate economic development, to reduce the need for children to work
- Improve adult remuneration to reduce the need for children to work
- Advocate against macro-level causes of child work
- Enhance working children's capacity to carry out advocacy on their own behalf
- Provide safer work for children
- Improve working conditions or reduce risk to children in a particular sector or a number of sectors
- Realise children's legal rights as children and as workers
- Increase the capacity of regulatory mechanisms and law enforcement personnel
- Prosecution of employers and traffickers
- Enforce minimum age law substituting other family members for children
- Enforce minimum age law with no alternative provision
- Rescue children from forced labour
- Improve schools to reduce incentives for children to drop out

- Allow children to combine school and work more easily
- Reduce costs to families of children's school attendance
- Other

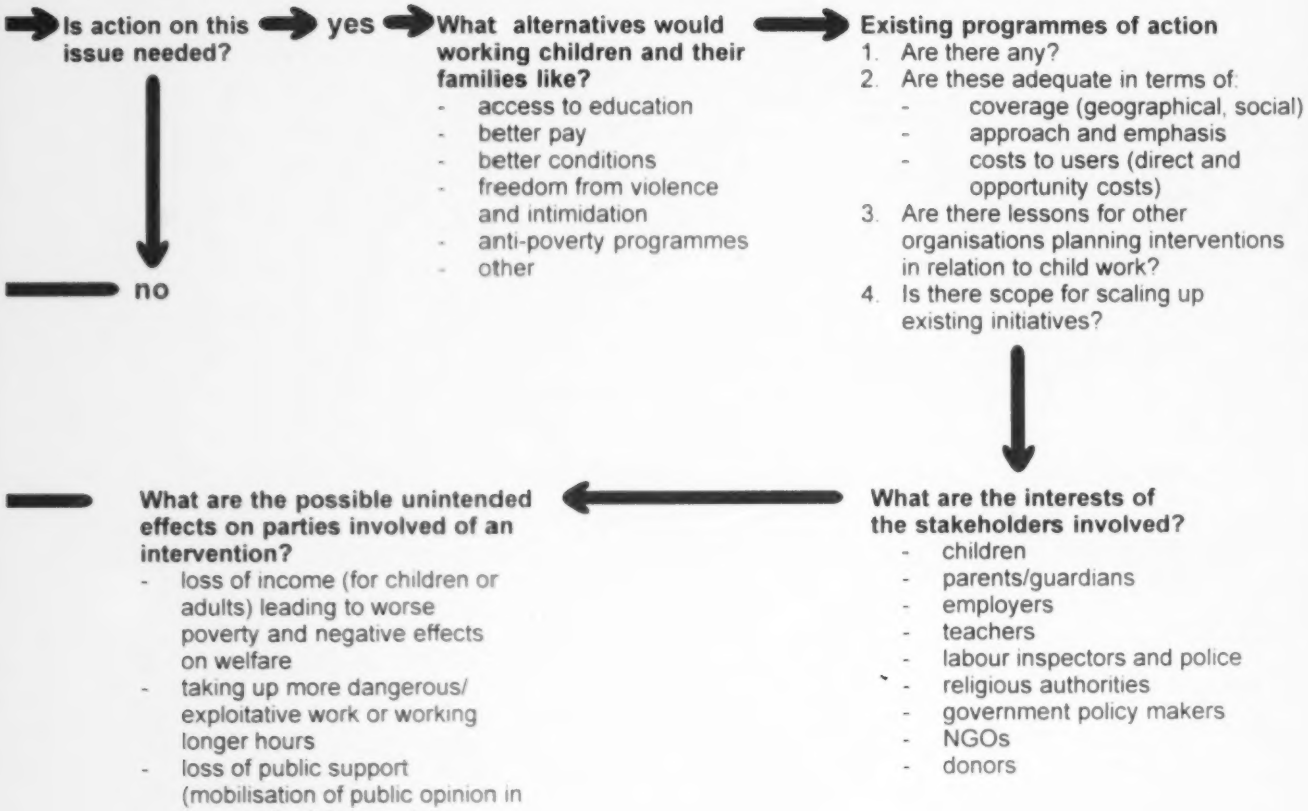
**3. What are the possible unintended effects of intervention?**

- Could it impoverish working children and/or their families?
- Could it increase the workload of other household members? Which ones? (Adults, children, fostered children or servants)
- Is children's school attendance likely to increase or decrease?
- Is children's nutritional status likely to increase or decrease?
- What are intra-household expenditure patterns (do adults normally spend on children's welfare? Do they prioritise certain children?)
- Could it result in a decline in children's social status - because they are no longer earning?
- Could it affect women in a similar way if they are unable to work because of a lack of childcare provision and children are no longer at work?

*Are the possible negative effects likely to outweigh the benefits?*

# Appendix 3
# Flowchart: questions to consider when planning interventions in relation to child work

64


Is action on this issue needed?
yes
What alternatives would working children and their families like?
- access to education
- better pay
- better conditions
- freedom from violence and intimidation
- anti-poverty programmes
- other
Existing programmes of action
1. Are there any?
2. Are these adequate in terms of:
- coverage (geographical, social)
- approach and emphasis
- costs to users (direct and opportunity costs)
3. Are there lessons for other organisations planning interventions in relation to child work?
4. Is there scope for scaling up existing initiatives?
What are the interests of the stakeholders involved?
- children
- parents/guardians
- employers
- teachers
- labour inspectors and police
- religious authorities
- government policy makers
- NGOs
- donors
What are the possible unintended effects on parties involved of an intervention?
- loss of income (for children or adults) leading to worse poverty and negative effects on welfare
- taking up more dangerous/ exploitative work or working longer hours
- loss of public support (mobilisation of public opinion in favour of child work etc)
no

# Appendix 4
# Detailed risks faced by working children

The intention of this appendix is not to imply that all risks detailed below are equally serious but to highlight some of the risks involved in work often considered 'safe' as well as that widely recognised as dangerous. We still lack adequate criteria to judge the less obvious forms of hazard and exploitation.

## Hazards

### Industrial

*Knotting carpets* for more than a few hours per day. Risks include: deformity from continuous squatting in a hunched position and lack of working space; respiratory disease from breathing in carpet dust; eye damage from the closeness of the work; and finger infections through handling chemically treated raw wool, particularly since child carpet workers often cut themselves (Kanbargi, 1988:102).

*Exposure to noxious chemicals* can cause respiratory problems, burns, cancers and lead to infertility and birth defects.

*Work in the explosives industry*, including the manufacture of firecrackers, matches and fireworks, as in Sivakasi, India. Risks include: burns and loss of eyes, limbs or death if an unexpected explosion occurs.

*Work in the glass industry.* Risks include heat exhaustion due to high furnace temperatures; burns and children's bare feet picking up glass splinters.

*Mining.* Risks include respiratory disease from breathing dust and from being underground; death or injury from collapsing tunnels. Examples include the coal mining industry of Colombia and the gold mining industry in Peru both of which employ children.

*Fish processing.* Risks include chilblains from standing barefoot in ice or melted water; broken nails and cut fingers from shelling prawns (SEBCON/PILER,1991).

*Brick and pottery-making.* Risks include respiratory disease, including silicosis from breathing dust and back strain from transport.

*Micro-electronic industries.* Eye and finger strain may arise from the closeness of the work.

### Agricultural hazards

*Exposure to agro-chemicals, particularly pesticides.* The increased availability and use of chemicals in smallholder agriculture often without proper protective measures, means that children helping their parents on farms may be at risk of pesticide poisoning. This may be particularly dangerous for developing nervous systems as well as causing increased risks of cancers, birth defects and death. This also applies to plantation agriculture particularly where chemicals are sprayed aerially as in the Guatemalan cotton industry (Menchu, 1984) the Colombian cut flower industry and in banana production in Central America.

*Exhaustion from hard labour for long hours.* While this may apply to most forms of work, there are particular hazards in small-holder agriculture given the lack of labour-saving technology of most small-scale farms and the manual nature of farming methods.

*Risks posed by agricultural machinery.* Risks arise from children using tools that are too heavy for them; cuts or the loss of fingers from blades; tractor accidents (Sachikonye, 1991). Where health care is limited the risk of relatively minor injuries becoming septic and complications developing is great.

*Herding stock.* Risks include exposure to heat and cold, drinking polluted water on rangelands, transmission of animal diseases to child herders.

*Landmines* in heavily mined areas such as Cambodia, Northern Iraq, Angola and others can cause injury and death. Risk depends on the extent to which the area is mined and on local divisions of labour by gender and age and may be most acute in remoter areas. Herding, gathering fuelwood and ploughing may be particularly risky.

*Cuts and ulceration* from sharp leaves or thorns in teapicking for example.

**Provision of water and fuel - head-loading and portering**

These risks derive from divisions of labour by age and gender and from children's small size and relative inexperience in detecting and avoiding hazards.

*Carrying heavy loads* of water, firewood, backpacks for tourists in trekking or mountain climbing areas (e.g. Nepal, Kenya, Malawi 55), farm produce or other goods run the risk of developing deformities or of spinal damage. Older children and girls who carry babies or toddlers on their hips or backs may be at greatest risk. Head-loading may result in the compression of vertebrae. Strapping heavy loads to the back, e.g. by tumpline may increase the danger of spinal curvature and of neck strain. Lifting and carrying loads may also cause hernias (DCI-Bolivia, 1995:11).

*Risks encountered in collecting fuelwood, water and fodder.* These may affect girls disproportionately. Risks include picking up splinters, which if not extracted can cause sores and infection; attacks by animals, people or exploding land-mines and exposure to water and insect-borne disease such as bilharzia and malaria.

**Domestic work**

*Long hours.* Risks arise due to exhaustion from being constantly on call including during the night, being the first to rise and the last to sleep; and the nature of domestic workers' tasks.

*Vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse.* Girls who constitute the vast majority of child domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse including HIV infection.They are often powerless to protest given their dependence on employers for food and shelter and their lower social status than their employers as young girls from poor, often minority families.If they get pregnant they may be dismissed or to keep their job may be unable to see their children for long periods of time.

*Psychological damage.* Child domestic workers are particularly likely to develop low self-esteem (Rahman, 1995; Bwibo and Onyango, 1987) due to loneliness, isolation and a lack of emotional support; violation of cultural norms concerning 'appropriate femininity' in purdah societies (Rahman, 1995); the unrelenting nature of the work and children's self-image as those who serve rather than are served, particularly where they are serving other children. Where the employing family continuously reinforces the child domestic's subordinate (lower class; minority ethnic group) status through verbal, physical or sexual abuse this may be particularly severe.

*Accidents and injuries.* Risks include cooking accidents such as burns from hot oil or scalds, and respiratory and eye problems from smoke from woodfires. Younger children may be particularly vulnerable to accidents. Children working for their own families also face these risks.

**Commercial sex work**

*Sex-related hazards.* Demand for ever-younger girls is growing as clients seek to avoid HIV. For example, 44.2 per cent of child sex workers interviewed in Bogota had started sex work before age 13 (Gutierrez, Mojica and Oakley, 1995). The younger the child the more acute the risk of tearing and the pain she is likely to experience on intercourse and the greater the risk of contracting

HIVand other STDs through broken skin. Boys experiencing anal intercourse face similar risks. Children's powerlessness in relation to clients and inexperience of sex work may make negotiating condom use particularly difficult and increasing their vulnerability to HIV.

*Physical abuse.* Sex workers run the risk of physical violence and even murder from their clients and from pimps/brothel owners if they refuse clients. Again children may be particularly powerless to resist.

*Emotional/psychological hazards.* There is a tacit consensus among activists that children's involvement in commercial sex work is likely to have negative consequences for their emotional and psychological development. These are rarely elaborated in detail but may result from children's separation from families and communities; ostracism by wider society because they are involved in sex work; shame about how they are earning their living and powerlessness to refuse clients. For girls, there is also the risk of early pregnancy and the financial and emotional stress of early parenthood.

#### Urban informal sector work

*Street-based work* such as car-washing, shoe-shining, bag-carrying and vending. Risks include: abuse by clients; traffic accidents, theft or extortion of goods and earnings; harassment or murder by police and business owners or their agents aiming to 'clean up' the streets. Street-working children may also be vulnerable to glue or drug-pushers, as an escape from cold, hunger and fear. Substance abuse can also reduce alertness to other hazards.

*Rag/litter-picking.* Risks include contracting tetanus or diseases borne by insects, rodents and worms living among decomposing materials.

*Transport-related work.* Risks include accidents as bus touts and conductors' assistants (mostly boys), muscular and back injuries from carrying heavy loads, or driving rickshaw, compounded by malnutrition.

*Home-based subcontracted work.* Semi-skilled work is increasingly subcontracted and undertaken mainly by women. Girls in particular often assist their mothers or other female relatives finish their quotas. Risks relate to the use of machinery, long hours and isolation. SEBCON/PILER (1991) found in Pakistan that child workers in home-based production (mostly girls) or enclosed workplaces were less confident and more shy and submissive than those who worked in open spaces such as vendors and shoe polishers.

*Involvement in military operations.* Young people join armies through: forced recruitment; out of political commitment, or because armies can represent a source of security. Hazards faced by child soldiers involve vulnerability to physical injuries and death, emotional and psychological damage, socialisation into violence, which they bring back to civilian society.

### Exploitation

Criteria for assessing exploitation include: the extent to which remuneration is commensurate with the work done; whether the child receives payment; the hours a child is expected to work; the child's freedom to quit or to take time off; whether children have been trafficked; children's eligibility for social security benefits; whether children are allowed to join, or form trade unions; the absence of physical or sexual violence or coercion and whether other workers' rights are being contravened. These are only applicable where employment is external to the family. Attempts to assess the exploitation of children working for their families are rare.

*Level of pay.* Little attention has been paid to assessing what constitutes fair pay for child workers in different activities. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value demands that children should be paid the same as adult

counterparts for the same work, though low adult wages may not constitute a 'fair' wage. Raising children's wages to those of adults might reduce demand for child workers. However, it might also provide an incentive for children to continue or enter work to maximise earnings.

*Who receives the pay.* Often children do not receive the pay for their work themselves and it is collected by a parent or guardian. For bonded child workers the payment is an up-front lump sum paid normally to the parents, which children must then work to pay off. Arguably if children are old enough to be working they should receive their pay. Girls may have less control over the income they earn than boys - SEBCON/PILER's study of working children in Karachi, Pakistan found that while boys generally retained some pocket money from their earnings very few girls did (1991:41).

*Freedom to quit.* Bonded child workers have no right to leave until their debt has been paid off. When bonded children escape they are often brought back to their workplaces by police colluding with employers and treated worse than before (CWA, 1985). Parents may also pressurise children not to quit a job in order to sustain family income.

*Freedom to take time off.* Children may not be allowed to take time off for sickness, family commitments etc., or may have to give up their job to do so.

*Hours worked.* Even when children contractually only have to work four-six hours per day, overtime may be compulsory and often unpaid.

*Level of responsibility.* Children may be given tasks which demand too much responsibility in comparison to their developmental stage - but may be punished if they fail to complete them adequately.

*Trafficking of children under false pretences.* In some parts of the world children are recruited with the promise of light work and an education but are taken to factories, brothels and to private houses as domestic workers, in the same country or internationally.

Trafficked children may be particularly open to exploitation, through their illegal immigration status, lack of documentation, their frequent lack of knowledge of the language in the area of destination and the racism of dominant ethnic groups to minorities.

*Other rights.* On grounds of age, because children often work illegally they are denied workers' rights and social security protection. This leaves them vulnerable to firing without notice and unable to claim compensation for injuries or sickness benefits, or often to protest against violence or coercion. The scale of working children's legal protection depends on their age and on the implementation of national laws. If they are not allowed to join, or form trade unions they may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

### Opportunities foregone

*Schooling.* Although many working children attend school many do not. Others' attendance is compromised by work demands which prevent regular attendance, result in children arriving late or not having time to study and being unable to keep up with schoolwork. If we equate education with formal schooling whether work compromises or facilitates school attendance is an important criterion of acceptability of work.[56] A study in the US found that the school performance of children aged 12-17 could be negatively affected after 15-20 hours work per week (Steinberg and Dornbush, 1991 cited in ILO, 1996:7), suggesting that over four hours' work per day may be excessive. Clearly this will depend on the nature of the work involved and the age of the child.

*Emotional development/socialisation.* The social and emotional development of children who are separated from responsible adult role models and

whose only adult contact is abusive and exploitative may be damaged. Lack of contact with peers may lead to loneliness and difficulties relating to others.

*Rest and recreation*. Children who work long hours or more in one occupation or by combining work and schooling may forego both sleep and waking recreation. Such hours are not uncommon in domestic service and in certain forms of industry where the workforce, including children, may have to work around the clock to complete an export order. Even in less extreme cases, children may have inadequate opportunity for recreation.

# Appendix 5
# Legislation on children and work

The following international legal instruments contain articles on or pertaining to children and work, normally expressed as 'child labour'. The most relevant articles are excerpted. The full legislation is printed in the ILO's Conditions of Work Digest vol. 10, no. 1, 1991. Anti-Slavery International has compiled briefings on various aspects of children's work with detailed information on relevant legal articles pertaining to particular conditions of work and are a good source of further information.

### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Article 32: '1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:

(a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admissions to employment;
(b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;
(c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of this present article.'

Other relevant articles are Article 31 on the right of children to rest and leisure, Article 35, requiring States Parties to prevent the sale and trafficking of children, Article 34 which obliges states to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation, Article 36, on the duty of States Parties to protect children against all other forms of exploitation, Article 12 on children's right to express and opinion and have that opinion taken into account, Article 15 on freedom of association, and article 28 on the right to education.

### The ILO Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973) No. 138

Article 2.
3. The minimum age specified in pursuance of paragraph 1 of this Article shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years
4. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 3 of this Article, a Member whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may, after consultation with the organisations of employers and wokers concered, where such exists, initially specify a minimum age of 14 years.

Article 3. 1. The minimum age for admission to any type of employment of work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons shall not be less than 18 years

Article 7. 1. National laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age on light work which is (a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development' and (b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit form the instruction received.

### The United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956)

Article 1
[States ratifying this treaty guarantee that they will] take all practicable and necessary legislative and other measures to bring about progressively, and as soon as possible the complete abolition or abandonment of....

(d) Any institution or practice whereby a child or young person under the age of 18 years, is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labour.

**The United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)**

Article 10
3. Special measures of protection and assistance should be taken on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions. Children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation. Their employment in work harmful to their morals or health, or dangerous to life or likely to hamper their normal development should be punishable by law. States should also set age limits below which the paid employment of child labour should be prohibited and punishable by law.

**The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979)**

Contains the following articles relating to girls and work:

Article 6, which prohibits trafficking in women and girls and Article 16, on the family which nullifies child marriages and therefore protects girls from being used as 'debt settlements and domestic slaves' (Ashworth, 1993:58).

**The Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ('the Bejing Declaration') (1995)**

Does not have legal status in the same way as the above instruments, but was ratified by participating governments (reservations tabled were typically on reproductive issues, rather than issues of women's and girls' economic rights), contains the following provisions on child labour. Under strategic objective F5 'Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination', governments, employers, employees, trade unions and women's organisations agree to:

'(m) set specific target dates for eliminating all forms of child labour that are contrary to accepted international standards and ensure the full enforcement of relevant existing laws and, where appropriate, enact the legislation necessary to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Labour Organization standards, ensuring the protection of working children, in particular, street children, through the provision of appropriate health, education and other social services;
'(n) Ensure that strategies to eliminate child labour also address the excessive demands made on some girls for unpaid work in their household and other households, where applicable' (1995:80).

The Declaration does not specify that it understands that increasing women's economic rights and independence may serve to increase the pressures on children, particularly girls to carry out household work.

# Notes

1 Terminology for children's work is subject to considerable debate. The term "child labour" is used when work is described as such by activists or the law. Otherwise, for a more inclusive consideration, "child work" or "children's work" are used.

2 This information is drawn from notes entitled "Child labour in India". The author and date are unclear. Despite difficulties inherent in the collection of reliable statistical data on the scale of child work, such statistics nevertheless gives an indication of the balance of forms of employment in which children are engaged.

3 Exceptions are Johnson, Hill and Ivan-Smith, 1995, Nepal; Reynolds, 1991, Zimbabwe and Nieuwenhuys, 1994, Kerala, India.

4 Either remunerated or non-remunerated. This raises a number of questions about methodology and definitions of economic activity, discussed further in note 5.

5 There are a number of methodological problems in attempting to set an economic value on children's unpaid work and striking parallels with attempts to valorise women's work. These include denial by adults that children's domestic activities constitute work – the fact that children are carrying out an activity means that adults may not consider it serious work – which may also affect children's own perceptions of whether their activities constitute work (Reynolds, 1991; Nieuwenhuys, 1994); problems of recall and the irrelevance of conventional ways of measuring time to many children; the intrusiveness of researching children's activities through constant observation; the fact that children may carry out a number of activities at a single time, such as minding a baby while cooking, among others.

6 Nevertheless women may remain legal and social minors in these same contexts.

7 Rohini Hensman, consultant on labour issues in India and Sri Lanka, personal communication.

8 No international legislation states that children "have the right" to work (Mike Dottridge, Anti-Slavery International, personal communication) though national regulations permitting particular work by certain age groups arguably have this effect. Peru's Legal Code for Children and Adolescents, Article 22, which states that "The State recognises the right of adolescents to work ... where such work is not hazardous to their development, physical, mental or emotional health, and does not compromise regular school attendance (Gustavo D'Angelo, personal communication) is unusual in its explicit acceptance of adolescents working.

9 Roy Trivedy, personal communication.

10 Simon Mollison, personal communication.

11 This is estimated at 20-30 per cent of the population of Latin America (Green, 1995).

12 Jane Nwanji, personal communication.

13 The extent to which adult and child labour can substitute for one another.

14 Presentations at the Women Working Worldwide Conference, University of Manchester, 20-21 April 1996, from the Philippines, South Korea, Mexico and Sri Lanka highlighted this problem.

15 Simon Mollison, personal communication.

16 Simon Mollison, personal communication.

17 The booklet with Samroeng's story is available from Child Workers in Asia (Bangkok office) and is based on a true story. After Samroeng's death, the Centre for the Protection of Children's Right, a Thai NGO, released the surviving children and helped them and their families to obtain compensation from the factory owners (CWA, 1995).

18 Lyn Elliot, personal communication. However, staying in school carries its own risks, as trading sexual favours is a common way for girls to acquire sufficient cash to pay for school expenses.

19 Marilyn Thomson, personal communication.

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20 Philip Dunham, presentation at IDS, Sussex, 21 January 1996.

21 Rachel Marcus, personal observations, rural Namibia.

22 Marion Molteno, personal communication.

23 John Parry-Williams, personal communication.

24 This motivation may be particularly marked in patrilineal societies in Africa and Asia, where a girl joins her husband's family or clan on marriage and is expected to work on behalf of her new family, rather than to support her parents in old age, or her siblings (John Parry-Williams, personal communication).

25 Schildkrout (1981) cited in Ennew (1995) observes that in Kano, Nigeria the counter-argument that by attending school girls are removed from the moral danger they are exposed to in street-trading, is increasingly compelling.

26 Claudia McConnell, personal communication.

27 Caroline Harper, personal observations, Northern Thailand.

28 Many, of course cannot be quantified, making attempts to trade risks and benefits off against one another particularly problematic.

29 See ILO (1991) for a detailed survey of age and hazard related legislation. Much protective legislation may be based on health risks faced by adults.

30 Most of the case studies in this section are drawn from project reports and plans of work. In few cases were evaluations available.

31 See Ennew (1994) for a guide on running projects with and for urban working children. Much of this is applicable to projects for working children in other sectors.

32 Those with an interest in a particular activity or issue for child work, these often include working children, parents, teachers, policy-makers, law enforcement personnel and employers.

33 Sushil Pyakurel INSEC, personal communication.

34 Research Report, the monthly briefing produced by the Council on Economic Priorities is a useful information source on such initiatives.

35 Juan de Dios Herrera, personal communication.

36 Simon Mollison, personal communication based on Shamim (1993).

37 See Chapter 4 for private sector initiatives aiming to eliminate child work, and Leipziger and Gunn (1995) for much fuller discussion of private sector initiatives related to child work.

38 Simon Mollison, personal communication.

39 A study of 100 families employing maids in Peru found that over half the adolescent males had had their first sexual experience with a girl or young woman domestic (ICCB Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 4.10.93, cited in Green, forthcoming).

40 It is likely that this is considerably more widespread than reported, given employers' reluctance to allow children to be interviewed. Children may also be too ashamed to report sexual abuse or beatings. Child domestics' drawings and plays often foreground these issues. See *Lettre de la rue*, 14 February 1996 and UNICEF/ENDA/ILO/Government of Senegal (1994) for evidence from Senegal.

41 The realisation that support services for working children need to address the reasons why children work through tackling issues of poverty and education with their families is increasingly informing work in this area.

42 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been much more widely ratified than ILO Convention 138 (168 compared to 46 states).

43 For a survey of national legislation, see ILO's Conditions of Work Digest (1991). This details minimum ages for

entry into certain kinds of employment througout the world. Mhatre (1995) provides a more detailed analysis of child labour legislation in South Asia.

44 However, in many export processing zones, such legislation may be deliberately relaxed as an incentive for investors.

45 See Hensman (1996), Hale (1996), Shaw (1996) for more detailed discussion of arguments for and against social clauses in world trade agreements.

46 This information is based on the presentations of labour activists at the Women Working Worldwide Conference, Manchester 20-21st April 1996.

47 Likewise, CWA (1995) reports that after the UK Government banned garment imports from Thailand in the late 1980s in response to publicity about the conditions of bonded young women workers, many such women lost their jobs and became sex workers.

48 This alone is no guarantee. Among other issues, unions must be able to pressure employers for compliance (Cha My-Kyung, Asia Monitor Resource Centre, Hong Kong, presentation at Women Working Worldwide Conference, Manchester 20 April 1996.

49 This section is based on a personal communication with David Ould of Anti-Slavery International, 3 May 1996.

50 Sue Chandler, personal communication.

51 Nick Arcilla and Reynaldo Coloma, personal communication.

52 Though it may have increased the demand for children's home-based labour.

53 Bronwen Lewis, personal communication.

54 Simon Mollison, personal communication.

55 Often carried by teenage boys, as well as by adult men.

56 This may be controversial where traditional socialisation systems involve training through work for adulthood, with perhaps additional religious instruction (Milne, 1993).

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**Child work issues are commanding increasing international attention. There is, however, growing concern that such attention is often not based on a sound analysis of the reasons why children work and can therefore lead to simplistic interventions with negative consequences for working children. This paper is designed to help development policy analysts and practitioners analyse the causes of child work and develop strategies for action.**

**Drawing on SCF's experience worldwide and that of other organisations, the paper examines the complex and varied causes of child work, including structural inequality, the effects of adjustment programmes, the globalisation of market economies and local social, cultural and political factors. It analyses the ingredients of successful and less successful interventions which aim to address these causes and to improve children's working conditions. This includes action on macro economic and social policy issues, legislation, education, anti-poverty programmes, rescues of working children, advocacy and awareness- raising.**

**Reflecting SCF's overseas experience, the main focus is child work in the South. However, recognising that children work and face hazards and exploitation worldwide, reference is also made to children's work in the North. It is intended that this paper will enable international, governmental and non-governmental organisations to work together and more effectively on child work issues in ways that promote the wellbeing of working children.**

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